



*A NEW
book on
JAN VERMEER
OF DELFT,
his life
and art, based
on the author's
original work*

*With 81
illustrations
in colour and
monochrome,
including
all of his
known
paintings*

VERMEER

by

PHILIP L. HALE


Completed and Prepared for the Press by

FREDERICK W. COBURN *and* RALPH T. HALE

Jan Vermeer of Delft

A FEW YEARS AGO Mr. Andrew W. Mellon is said to have paid \$290,000 for one of Vermeer's paintings. Yet at a time not many decades back his work was so little esteemed that occasionally names of other painters were substituted for Vermeer's in order to effect the sale of one of his pictures at a high price. Although in his forty-three years Vermeer had won prestige in his own seventeenth century Holland, his name for some reason was almost forgotten less than fifty years after his death, and his work did not again acquire significance in the eyes of the art world until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Even as recently as twenty-five years ago he was distinctly a "painter's painter," known to the average art lover, if at all, as a minor Dutch artist. Today, however, his work receives universal recognition. His pictures are esteemed more highly than those of many of the other masters. The value of the forty-one pictures definitely attributed to him is estimated at \$25,000,000. From Vermeer, the unknown, he has come to be considered by Vermeer enthusiasts as the greatest painter of all time.

(Continued on back flap)



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WITH EIGHTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS, OF WHICH TEN ARE IN
COLOUR, REPRODUCED EITHER FROM THE PAINTINGS GENERALLY
ACCEPTED AS THE WORK OF VERMEER OR FROM PAINTINGS
SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTED TO HIM; TOGETHER WITH EXAMPLES
OF THE WORK OF SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES AND OTHER
MATERIAL ILLUSTRATING HIS SURROUNDINGS

Willa Kellogg
Collection



Boston

New York

HALE, CUSHMAN & FLINT

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National Gallery, London

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54 A LIST OF PICTURES SOLD AT AMSTERDAM, MAY 16, 1696

At this sale twenty-one paintings by Vermeer were sold. The Vermeer items are Nos. 1 to 12 inclusive and 31 to 40 inclusive; for some reason, possibly the typesetter's error, no No. 34 is given. The list was published in Volume I, pp. 34-40, of Gerard Hoet's "Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen," two volumes, The Hague, 1752. Pages 34, 35, 36 and 37 of Volume I.

From the Copy in the Library of Congress, Washington

55 Pages 38, 39 and 40 of Volume I of Gerard Hoet's "Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen," completing the list of the pictures sold at Amsterdam May 16, 1696.

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56, 57, 58 Three groups of pictures of Delft in 1936, from photographs by Ralph T. Hale

A Note by the Publishers

WHEN PHILIP L. HALE WROTE his "Jan Vermeer of Delft" in 1913, the Dutch master was distinctly a "painter's painter." As the years went by, however, he came to be known to a larger and larger portion of the general public, until now the announcement that a picture by Vermeer has been discovered, to add to the small number, even yet less than fifty, of those accepted as authentically by this painter, is news of international interest beyond the limits of the specialized "art world." To this widespread realization of Vermeer's importance it is not too much to say that Mr. Hale's book notably contributed its share.

It has long been out of print, but a few years ago several newly discovered Vermeers came to light within a short time, and a number of the most beautiful of those previously known were, during the same period, transferred from their old European homes to the United States. Plans, therefore, were made for a revision and enlargement of the book. The author had proceeded almost to the completion of his work and had outlined his ideas for the final work of co-ordination with his new publishers-to-be (one of whom, as it happened — of the same name, though not a relative — had been associated with the original publication of the book) when his sudden death put an end for the time being to all work on the book.

Recently, however, the publishers have deemed it advisable to see that the work, so well advanced, be carried to completion. With the coöperation of Mr. Hale's widow, Mrs. Lilian Westcott Hale, herself also an important American painter, the final work of revision and enlargement, to bring together the original text and the author's manuscript and notes on the "new" pictures, was placed in the hands of those friends of the author who had been the most intimately associated with the author's preparation of the earlier book — Mr. Frederick W. Coburn, artist, art critic and contributor to the "Dictionary of American Biography," and Mr. Ralph T. Hale,

editor and publisher, to whom Mr. Coburn had made the suggestion in 1913 that Mr. Philip L. Hale be invited to write a book on Vermeer.

This work of revision and coördination developed into a search for all possible discoverable material about Vermeer and a re-assessment of the knowledge of his life and works. Material never before found or, if known, never before gathered together, was made available as a result of this quest, — a quest with which Mr. Coburn and Mr. Hale were occupied for so many months that their task quickly took on the character of a delightful and exciting hobby, and even led the second of the twain to make a pilgrimage to Delft in the summer of 1936.

The help of numerous scholars, librarians, museum staffs and many other individuals in the United States and Europe has been of inestimable value.

The present volume, though based on the original work, is essentially a new book, as indeed the author intended that it should be. By examination of original sources and a challenge of every statement as to the "pedigree" and history of the several paintings, errors — made, in some instances, generations ago and repeated again and again — have been corrected, and the contributions of scholars brought together for the benefit of the lovers of Dutch art in general and of Vermeer in particular.

The underlying vitality of the author's original treatment of Vermeer's work is re-emphasized in the new book; here, as in the earlier volume, he gives the appreciative reader the privilege — almost, if not quite, unique among art books — of seeing a painter delineate, one after the other, the pictures of another painter, and criticise them as aptly and suggestively as he would criticise paintings done by one of his own contemporaries, or even one of his own art students. And after all, any researcher among the records can produce information about the physical facts of where a man was born, or died, or was buried, but only a painter with the painter's training and the painter's eye can really see what another painter has done and was trying to do.

By Way of Acknowledgment

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Philip L. Hale—An Appreciation

THE ZEST WITH WHICH PHILIP L. Hale undertook the work of writing a book on "Jan Vermeer of Delft" was characteristic of the man. By inheritance from creatively vigorous ancestors, he was virile and versatile. As his friend Mr. Frank W. Buxton wrote, in an editorial article in the *Boston Herald*, "Hale was good as an art instructor, painter, writer and critic; better as a draftsman and anatomist; and best of all as a kindly, quizzical observer of the gorgeous pageantry of life."

He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, May 21, 1865, one of the several children of the Reverend Edward Everett Hale and Emily Baldwin (Perkins) Hale. His ancestry was distinguished and literary. His grandfather, Nathan Hale, a nephew of Nathan Hale, the American patriot, was for many years editor-in-chief of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. Through his paternal grandmother, Sarah Preston Everett, he was of the old Puritan family of Everett, or Evered. In other lines, too, he was of notable Colonial lineage. His father, a graduate of Harvard in 1839, a Unitarian minister long settled in Boston, was the author of "The Man Without a Country," "A New England Boyhood," and many other books. At the Hale home in Roxbury, Philip L. Hale developed from boyhood into youth, already a big, muscular chap with a predilection for boxing and other athletic sports. He was fortunate in having parents who believed in allowing him to follow his various natural bents.

"Four years of Harvard College, then law, or divinity, or business, or possibly architecture," wrote the present writer

a number of years ago, in an article on Philip L. Hale and his art, “would have been the normal course for a son of the most eminent Unitarian clergyman of Boston, the more particularly as the boy was trained conventionally at the Roxbury Latin School for preliminaries, finals and the freshman football team. Painting, however, had to some extent secured recognition as a profession at least possible for a young man of good family in Boston, even though Mr. Hale himself has recalled how ‘a worthy painter of high degree, for Boston, once said in a speech to some architects that one of the joys of being an architect was that it is a gentleman’s profession, and he rather lamented his own lot of being in with a crowd of low fellows — painters, if you please.’

“The limitation,” the article continued, “upon Philip Hale’s learning to draw and paint was that he should first pass his Harvard entrance examinations, a test of secondary school scholarship which he met, taking honours in English, a distinction rare at Harvard in the 1880’s. He thereupon was permitted to enter the school of drawing and painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; this had recently been organized under the direction of Otto Grundmann, a German artist who was an admirable teacher of academic drawing. Mr. Hale enrolled himself later at the Art Students’ League of New York where Kenyon Cox was teaching attentive students the manner of making a possible man out of a brave array of black dots, and where the young man from Boston was attracted especially by the teaching of J. Alden Weir, later president of the National Academy of Design. Paris followed in due course, — a couple of years at Julian’s, after whose death Mr. Hale, writing of the teaching at the Julian academy, said: ‘Julian — I write this for the uninitiate — did not himself teach, but engaged great and glorious masters like Bouguereau, Lefebvre, Boulanger, Tony



PHILIP L. HALE

1865-1931

Robert-Fleury, Doucet, Constant, to come and criticise his classes.' ”

From Paris Mr. Hale returned to Boston where he painted, taught and wrote during the rest of his life. His abounding vitality, his wide range of interests, enabled him to express himself variously and effectively.

His influence on his profession was far-reaching and salutary. He taught at the school of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for forty years, almost to the very day of his death from an emergency operation for appendicitis in 1931. During much of that time it was the beginners who came under Philip L. Hale's instruction. His patient and searching criticisms taught them respect and enthusiasm for the essentials of constructive drawing; from him they went well-prepared to paint in the classes of Frank W. Benson and Edmund C. Tarbell or to model in the sculpture department under Bela Lyon Pratt. For many years he also gave at the school each year a course of lectures in artistic anatomy, so interesting and so useful that after the war these were transferred from a schoolroom to the Museum lecture hall and were made available for a small fee to the general public. To Philadelphia Mr. Hale went weekly for some years to teach as a member of the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and he long had classes at Hartford, Connecticut, the home city of his wife and former pupil, Lilian Westcott Hale.

As a painter Mr. Hale experimented widely, exploring the technical possibilities of his art with acumen, sagacity and great professional skill. In his early years he was interested in the problems of registration of light as Monet and Seurat had first stated them. He was an earnest student of design and composition throughout his career. Scornful of the amateurishness of some of the “ modernists ” whose viewpoint he once described as “ the last stand of the literati in art,” he was nevertheless sym-

pathetic with the intent of the professionally trained and discriminating modernists to tell their artistic story through what he used to call "purposive deformations of character."

His own work meantime commanded the respect and admiration of practically all groups of American artists, and as shown at the national exhibitions it won considerable popularity among laymen. It gained for the painter such distinctions and prizes as the following: Honourable mention, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901; bronze medal, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, 1904; gold medal, International Exposition, Buenos Aires, 1910; Norman Wait Harris silver medal, Chicago Art Institute, 1914; Proctor portrait prize, National Academy of Design, 1916; Lea prize, Philadelphia Water Color Club, 1916; popular prize, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1919. Among his paintings which in his lifetime were acquired for public collections were: "The Crimson Rambler," Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; "Spirit of Antique Art," National Museum, Montevideo, Uruguay; "Girl with Muff," Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington; "Girl with Pearls," Philadelphia Art Club. The Philip L. Hale Memorial Exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1931 brought together from public and private collections a great retrospective display of the paintings and drawings of an artist who to the end experienced no weakening of the creative urge.

Mr. Hale wrote naturally and easily, as one of his family tradition should, and yet without the precision and conciseness of the trained professional author. He abhorred the literary criticism of art. He had abjured the kind of education which might have made him what one of his brothers became — a scholarly professor of the English language and literature. He was averse to cultural pretence. He told with gusto the story of a fellow artist who when asked by other husky card-players in

a railway smoker what business he was in replied quite truthfully, "In the paint business." Mr. Hale, in brief, was hostile, by temperament and training, to literary dilettanteism. Yet, in a busy life, he wrote voluminously because he liked to say in print what he thought, and because he often felt that he had something which ought to be said.

And surely he had. Criticising at various periods the exhibited work of fellow artists in the columns of three Boston newspapers, the *Journal*, the *Advertiser*, and the *Herald*, Philip L. Hale (his name often confused with that of his friend and contemporary, Philip Hale, the music critic) expressed pungently, often humourously, and always with underlying seriousness his philosophy of art and life. He took delight in puncturing overblown solemnity. He was impatient with duffers and crude amateurs. Yet he was always the constructive critic, whether in his classroom or in a newspaper column.

His philosophy of the art of painting Mr. Hale summed up in his "Jan Vermeer of Delft" (1913). He had given loving study to many of the Vermeers in public collections. He had edited the pictures and text of the little volume on Vermeer in the series "Masters in Art," brought out by his friends, Messrs. Bates and Guild, Boston. He was well prepared to undertake the larger work.

No evaluation of Mr. Hale's personality and achievements has been more pregnantly suggestive to his friends, for reminiscence and regret, than the editorial article by Mr. Buxton from which we have already quoted:

"His student days in Paris had added a touch of Gallic wit, lightness and kindness to the humour and solid intellectual qualities which had come down to him from a long line of distinguished ancestors. Humanity of any kind beguiled him, the pugilist and the baseball player being as attractive to him as

an imposing figure of the pulpit or the laboratory. He took great pleasure in working for hours and days on one bit of work; it was just as much fun for him to sit from early in the evening until two or three in the morning at a boxing tournament. He worked harder than was necessary and did not watch his health any too carefully, and died in the prime of his powers. The literary talent of his father, Edward Everett Hale, was in him, but he loved to teach, to paint and to draw — especially to draw. This draftsmanship has been characterized as ‘superb.’ Just as there are lawyers’ lawyers and doctors’ doctors, there are artists’ artists, men whose work can be appreciated fully only by those who are themselves masters of their craft. Hale as a draftsman belonged in such a class.

“What a jovial companion he was! He had read widely, seen much, and, like Walt Whitman and François Villon, he took huge delight in being alive and knowing others who shared the zest of living. He ‘went across’ after a minute or two of acquaintance, and the impression which he made was always sharp and pleasing. A peculiar timbre in his voice made his talk a joy.

“At sixty-five he was intellectually more supple than in his twenties. He had much admiration for the magazine illustrator, the comic strip artist, the cartoonist, the ‘dinner-pail artists,’ as he used to style them sympathetically. An art instructor all his life, he had nothing of the rule-of-thumb dogmatist and birchman in him. The absence of popular recognition of his work had not embittered him in the least. He took life as it came, and it was better because he was part of it.”

FREDERICK W. COBURN

Part I

THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

I · *Vermeer the Supreme Painter*

THE BEST MEN IN ART ARE found by a process of elimination. It may be a challenging statement to call Jan Vermeer of Delft the greatest painter who has ever lived. Yet in sheer downright painting, he was in most respects the leader of all. There were giants, of course, such as Velázquez, Rubens and Rembrandt, who did very wonderful things, but none of these ever conceived of arriving at tone by an exquisitely just relation of colour values — the essence of contemporary painting that is really good.

Various qualities in Vermeer's work are those for which the best painters of our day strive: his design, his colour values, his edges, his way of using the square touch, his occasionally *poin-tillé* touch, all of which are qualities that one seldom observes in other old masters. We of today particularly admire Vermeer because he has attacked what seem to us significant problems or motives, and has solved them, on the whole, as we like to see them solved. And with this he has been able to retain something of the serenity, poise and finish that we regard as peculiarly the property of the old masters. Our present-day work is often petulant; that of the old masters was generally serene.

True it is, as will appear in the discussion to follow, that Vermeer was not always wholly successful. Nobody ever has been, and doubtless no one ever will be. It is silly to ascribe to one's hero all the virtues; it is enough to point out the qualities which he possesses.

By and large, Vermeer has more great painting qualities and fewer defects than any other painter of any time or place. He

was born in 1632 and died at the age of forty-three in 1675; and it is when one compares him with other great artists of his own day and land that his superiority is most manifest. Terborch, by comparison with Vermeer, appears sleazy and mannered; de Hooch looks hot and stodgy; even Metsu, perhaps the most accomplished technician of them all, seems rather artificial and by no means alert to colour values. Each of these men, of course, had extraordinary qualities. But Vermeer combined within himself most of their good qualities and avoided many of their defects.

His manner of seeing is the basic excellence of Vermeer's art — the thing that sets it apart from the work of other men. Where others had a genius for drawing or for colouration, he had a genius for vision. One arrives, while studying his work carefully, at a feeling that he looked at things harder than others have looked at them. Many painters acquire a manner of making things, a *parti-pris*, which impels them to distort nature to suit their book. Vermeer, too, had his manner of workmanship, but after he had laid his picture in, and indeed carried it quite far, he seems to have sat back and looked at what was before him again and again to see if there was anything he could do to his picture to make it portray more closely the real aspect of nature — *la vraie vérité*, as Gustave Courbet liked to call it. His almost perfect rendering was the outcome of perfect understanding.

There is a tendency in appraising the work of artists to adore warm, picturesque personalities. To some writers Rembrandt is a delight not so much on account of the qualities of his painting as because of his remarkable way of living. Goya is admired not merely because of his good painting but also because he was a bull fighter. Many feel that they must have the work of a man rich, warm, passionate. They are not interested that it shall be

right. Many of us, indeed, have forgotten that there is a beauty in rightness; that there really is no beauty without it.

Vermeer's art has this quality of cool, well-planned rightness to the full. He holds, as it were, a silver mirror up to nature, but he tells no merely pleasant tale as he holds it. His work is as intensely personal as any that was ever done, but it offers a personality disengaged from self-consciousness during the making process.

His name is not surrounded by the kind of fame for which a more accurate word is notoriety. He was no playboy of the boulevards, he did not run away with some rival painter's wife, he did not do eccentric things of the kind for which, again, the better term is egocentric. On the contrary, so little was known of him for about two hundred and fifty years that the impression became fixed that almost nothing at all was known about him. Following the lead of his "rediscoverer," M. Théophile Thoré, who called him "the Sphinx of Delft," those members of the general public who knew anything about him at all — even so much as his name — thought of him as a man of mystery. They came almost to doubt his very existence and to wonder how pictures painted so entrancingly could be the work of a man so little known and so completely without any background of alluring anecdote. Indeed, as we shall see, many of his pictures themselves were for years attributed to other painters, some through ignorance, some through deliberate fraud, because they would sell better if they bore some other name than his — some name that was at the moment better known.

It may truly be said that the real romance of Vermeer is the extraordinary story of how he sank into oblivion, slumbered for centuries and then came again out of his deep obscurity into the light of fame. For, as we shall see, he was by no means an unimportant figure in his own day. Modern research, the results

of which are presented in later pages, has established the fact that he attained the status of master painter in the Guild of St. Luke at Delft when he was barely twenty-one, the son of parents who came from families on the whole of fairly substantial means; that he was mentioned in a poem written when he was scarcely twenty-two in a way which indicates how highly he was considered as a young man of promise; that he had already married at twenty the daughter of a woman who clearly regarded him as a good and dependable son-in-law throughout his comparatively short life; that he was, during at least four different years, one of the six Syndics of the Guild and for two of those years their chairman or president; that he was especially visited by a French connoisseur in his studio; that he was particularly mentioned in the voluminous work of the local historian during his own lifetime; that throughout his career as a painter in Delft he associated on equal terms in responsible positions with men much older than himself; that there is reason to believe that his pictures brought excellent prices during his own day because sales records show that in the years immediately following his death they sold for sums which compared favorably with those paid for the work of other men. For reasons which will be set forth later, however, Vermeer's reputation presently languished and the fame which seemed likely to be his passed him by. We see, perhaps, an early indication of this in the record of a sale of pictures less than half a century after his death when the dealer, in listing a picture by Vermeer of Delft, set forth as a selling argument that it was as good as an Egton van der Neer.

One of the reasons why his reputation became obscured may have been because so few of his pictures came into public view. If it be true, as some scholars surmise, that his productive years, which in the nature of things could not have been much

more than twenty, were really no more than ten, the number of paintings which he left behind him must still be regarded as small, even when one realizes how much time it must have taken to paint as he painted. There are not fifty well-authenticated pictures by Vermeer known to be in the world today, and the number of "lost" Vermeers, even if one includes some dubiously recorded attributions, is small. A painter whose name seldom turned up in the sales catalogues could not become widely known by that easiest of all methods of publicity — getting frequently mentioned; and with so limited a number of pictures to change hands the occasions when a Vermeer would be offered would naturally be few. And so it was perhaps not surprising, when John Smith wrote his nine-volume work on the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters, in 1833, that he remarked, with curious logic, in the tiny paragraph which he devoted to Vermeer, "this painter is so little known, by reason of the scarcity of his works, that it is quite inexplicable how he attained the excellence many of them exhibit."

Inexplicable or not, "the excellence many of them exhibit" was the thing which finally brought Vermeer the fame so long denied him, for when in the middle fifties of the nineteenth century M. Thoré saw the *View of Delft* at The Hague, he was so impressed by its excellence that he set out forthwith on his quest for more pictures by its little known painter.

That was the beginning. The growth of Vermeer's fame was slow, but it was steady, and it was safe and sure. Now and then an article appeared, and now and then a book. Errors of fact and errors of surmise were repeated, after the manner of writers, from one writer to another. Slowly the obscurity was lifted, however, and the facts emerged.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of a painter's fame is where his pictures are to be found and how much they bring

in the marketplace. In Vermeer's case, of the forty-odd pictures satisfactorily ascribed to him, more than four-fifths have arrived at final and permanent homes in public museums and of the few others several are in collections which are on their way to becoming public property. The time is not far distant, therefore, when the opportunity to apply the criterion of price to a picture by Vermeer will have gone and when it will not be a matter of sensational news that an American collector has bought a Vermeer for \$290,000 or that another American collector has offered his for a quarter of a million dollars. When twenty-one of Vermeer's paintings were sold in Amsterdam in 1696 they brought all told only 1404 florins, a small sum judged by modern standards, even though, as has already been said, their prices were not small by comparison with others. With scarcely more than twice as many accounted for today, Mr. James Henry Duveen has estimated the total value of the entire small number at about twenty-five million dollars (five million pounds). When the *Music Lesson* was bought as a van Mieris for King George III, it cost less than \$500 (£100); now it is said to be worth from \$400,000 to \$500,000 (£80,000 to £100,000). The *Milkwoman* sold for about \$70 in 1696; some two centuries later it was bought for the Rijks Museum at Amsterdam for about \$120,000 (£24,000). Instances might be multiplied, but the fuller story will be found in Part II of the present volume where we shall see the records of sale of this, that or the other picture, and shall be able to apply the yardstick of market value to the fluctuations of Vermeer's fame during the years in which his paintings have lifted his name to the heights because of "the excellence many of them exhibit."

The personality which through the years has eluded those whose attention can be caught only by the beating of the drum is revealed in the device of subject, in the arrangement of col-



in the marketplace. In Vermeer's case, of the forty-odd pictures satisfactorily ascribed to him, more than four-fifths have arrived at final and permanent homes in public museums and of the few others several are in collections which are on their way to becoming public property. The time is now far distant, therefore, when the opportunity to apply the criterion of price to a picture by Vermeer will have gone and when it will not be a matter of sensational news that an American collector has bought a Vermeer for \$100,000 or that another American collector has offered his for a quarter of a million dollars. A few years ago twenty-nine of Vermeer's paintings were sold in Amsterdam in 1896 they brought all told only 1404 florins, a small sum for the most part by modern standards, even though, as has already been said, their prices were small by comparison with others.

Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE MUSIC LESSON

also called A LADY AND A GENTLEMAN AT A SPINET
Mr. James Henry ...
ROYAL COLLECTION, GREAT BRITAIN
(Generally known as the Windsor Castle Vermeer)

million pounds). When the Music Lesson was bought as a gift from King George III. it cost less than \$200 (£100,000) now it is said to be worth from \$200,000 to \$500,000 (£100,000 to £250,000). The *Illustration* sold for about \$70 in 1896, some two centuries later it was bought for the Rijks Museum at Amsterdam for about \$100,000 (£24,000); instances might be multiplied, but the full account will be found in Part II of the present volume where we shall see the records of sale of this, that of the other picture, and shall be able to apply the yardstick of market value to the fluctuations of Vermeer's fame during the years in which his paintings have added his name to the longest because of "the excellence many of them exhibit."

The personality which through the years has attracted some-
what attention can be caught only by the beating of his drum
is revealed in the device of subject, in the arrangement of col-



ours, in the registration of colour values and of edges; it does not appear in little graces of indication and handling. The man simply painted on, striving for and attaining the rightness of things, not cunning little affectations, taking mannerisms or engaging graces. He conceived and sought the best arrangement of line and colour that he could achieve. He must have had the thought, uttered or unexpressed, that if only he could make his painting just like what was before him it would comprise all the valid technical merits.

And it is this thought of the supreme value of rightness of artistic perception that is the underlying idea of the chapters to follow on Vermeer, the man and the artist.

II · *Delft and the Background of Vermeer's Art*

INTO DELFT ONE COMES NOWADAYS by train or tram or motor-car. The Dutch trains are fast and comfortable, the trams are well-equipped and cheap, and the motor-roads, whether for the bus or for one's own car, are among the best in the world.

The Delft of today is a lovely old town of some fifty thousand inhabitants. An important educational centre, it is filled with historical associations for the Netherlander, and the latter is justly proud of his country and its achievements. Compared with the great business centres, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Delft is quiet and peaceful. The motor-car runs smoothly over its bricked streets and across the many bridges spanning the canals which occupy the centre of most of them. Everywhere is the bicycle, noiseless except for its tinkling bell. Jurists, business men, clergymen, nuns, women going to do their shopping, schoolboys and schoolgirls — everybody in Delft, as elsewhere in Holland, uses the bicycle. Activity without bustle, earnest endeavour without rough and rowdy noise, cleanliness, kindness and good manners — these are characteristic of Delft, as of all Holland.

In Vermeer's time the visitor came into Delft by the highway, or perhaps even more often by canal-boat. Then, as now, the city was encircled by the Singel Gracht, part of the great intercommunicating canal system of Holland. Outside of the Singel Gracht is today a moderate development of new streets.

One of these streets, to the eastward of the old town, is called Vermeerstraat; farther to the north, on the same side, is Rembrandtstraat. To gain admittance to Delft in the days of Vermeer, one crossed the Singel Gracht through various city gates: the Haagsche Poort, the Kettel Poort, the Oost Poort, the Rotterdamsche Poort, and so on. Of these only the Oost Poort remains today and through it one enters the city from the road from Rotterdam. The Rotterdamsche Poort was the spired gate shown in Vermeer's *View of Delft*; though the gate has been demolished, there is a bridge at the same point and the canal is scarcely changed after nearly three centuries.

Today, as in Vermeer's time, the great churches of the town are the Old Church, begun about 1250, directly across the Oude Delft from the Prinsenhof, and the New Church, built between 1396 and 1496, on the easterly side of the marketplace. In the Old Church Vermeer and his wife are both buried, though the spot is unmarked and unknown. In the New Church, where Vermeer's baptism took place, lies William the Silent, and the church to this day is the burial place of the royal family of the Netherlands. Its tall tower, 375 feet high, is to be seen in the right centre of Vermeer's *View of Delft*, and today it still looms high above the city and the surrounding country. From it still sounds the carillon of forty bells installed in 1663 by Frans Hemony, who with his brother Pieter made the bells which, Mr. William Gorham Rice tells us, (in his charming "Carillon Music and Singing Towers of the Old World and the New,") "remain predominant in the towers of the Low Countries today." As one hears this carillon pealing out its lovely music every half hour, one can fancy Vermeer's own delight in its melodies, as he sat in his house at No. 25 Oude Langendijk, almost in the very shadow of the tower itself.

Opposite the New Church across the marketplace, with the

statue of Hugo Grotius between, is the Town Hall, built in 1618, where pictures by another Delft master, M. J. Miereveld, are still to be seen.

The marketplace of Delft has always been, and still is, the lively, though orderly, centre of the town's activities. The placid existence of the burghers of Delft, however, was harshly shattered on one notable occasion, the date of which is as outstanding in the town's annals as are 1066 and 1492 in world history. For, there were powder magazines in Delft in Vermeer's day, as now, hard though it be to associate the peaceful calm of the place with anything so warlike. One of these blew up. The date was October 12, 1654. Among the victims was Vermeer's painter friend, Carel Fabritius.

In the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia is a painting by Pieter de Hooch depicting a view of Delft after this great disaster. The picture shows sites of houses with only the cellar walls standing, other houses with cracked walls or rooms with their outer walls removed by the explosion, quite like a city which has suffered from a war-time bombardment. In the foreground is a half-grown boy with his right arm in a sling and a bandage around his forehead — altogether a realistic portrayal. The explosion was commemorated also in contemporary pottery.

The magazine which blew up contained 85,000 pounds of gunpowder. The exact number killed has never been known. The sound, it is said, was heard at Helder, seventy miles away, between the North Sea and the Zuider Zee, more than thirty miles north of Amsterdam. Over 200 houses in Delft were completely demolished and there was no building in the town that was not damaged. As a major disaster to the town this explosion of 1654 was ranked with the great fire of 1536 which had destroyed three-quarters of the buildings. Delft arose bravely from both these great calamities.

In Sir Philip Skippon's "Account of a Journey made thro' part of the Low-Countries, Germany, Italy and France," the writer tells of his visit to Delft, in 1663. At Rotterdam, "May 25, about six in the afternoon," he says, "we took our seats in the passage-boat, somewhat like our pleasure-barges on the Thames (such a boat goes off every hour of the day) and by one horse were drawn in two hours' time, two Dutch miles to Delft.

"In this passage there was a collection made by the boatmen among the passengers for the poor.

"Delft is a large city very fairly built, having channels of water running through many of the streets: the exchange is a neatly paved area (paved with brick) having one side and a half cloistered. We observed a cryer in the streets, who before he spoke, struck a piece of brass, and made a noise like the sound of a tinker's kettle, which was instead of ringing a bell, used by the cryers in England. The marketplace is a fair square, where the stadthouse stands; a neat building adorned with a curious gilt front, and a handsome statue of justice. Over the door is written '*Haec Domus odit* 1530.'

"Two large churches in this City, each having two organs.

"On the 28th of May was a great fair for cattle, etc. Delft is noted for making earthen ware. An English church here.

"1 Scout or Praetor, 2 Burgomasters, 7 Scabini and 40 of the Vroetschap rule this town.

"May 28. In an hour's time we went by boat to the Hague," — an entry which throws interesting light on the ease and regularity of travel in the Holland of that day, then, as now, orderly in all its affairs.

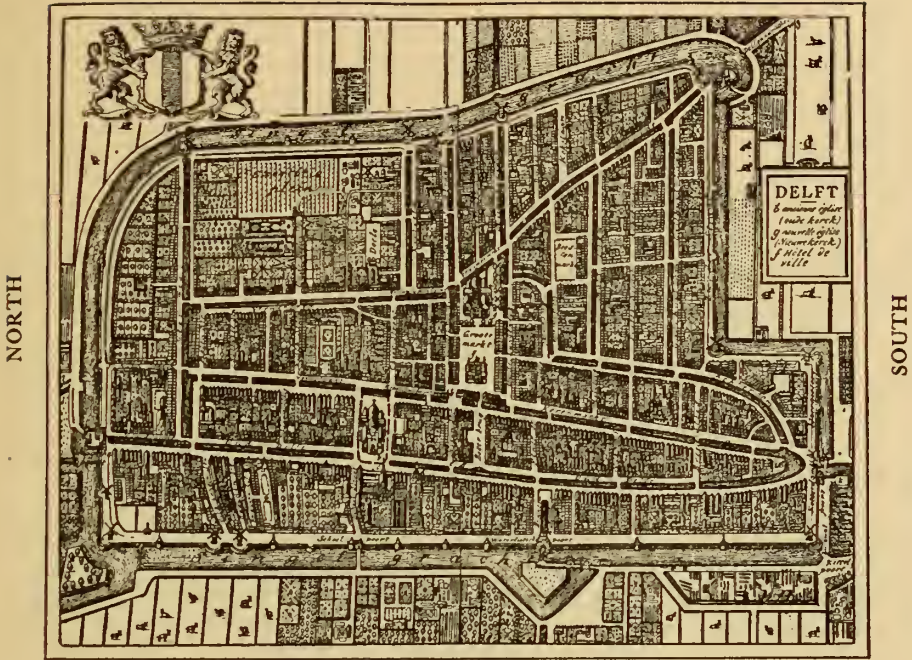
No longer is the Town Hall "adorned with a curious gilt front." But the survival of a custom mentioned by Sir Philip is worthy of note. May 28, 1663, fell on Thursday; today, as in 1663, if the traveler finds himself in Delft on a Thursday, he will still find market being held in the great marketplace, for

the sale of cheeses, flowers, and other commodities, and if he will walk through the Moolepoort, past Vermeer's house on the Oude Langendijk, he will presently find himself in the Beesten Markt and see the cattle and sheep and hogs offered for sale, and hear their barnyard calls. Market-day in Delft is still Thursday.

Incidentally Sir Philip tells how "at one Jean Vander Mere's, an apothecary, we saw a museum, or cabinet of varieties." The author gives a long list of animals and curiosities, among them "zebra or civet-cat, a piece of a rhinoceros's skin, the head of a dolphin, a giant's tooth, an elephant's tooth, *petim buaba* or tobacco-pipe fish, the cup prince William of Nassau last drank out of, the idol Isis, another idol being a brass heron on a tortoise, Indian dice, a Japan letter written to the Dutch governor, a locust of the kind St. John the Baptist ate, the brains of a sea-cow petrified, etc." "This Apothecary," says the author, "hath a garden of rare plants, which he was not at leisure to shew us." The apothecary was one of five Jan van der Meers contemporary with our artist. He is referred to in other accounts of the day as Dr. van der Meer.

Delft, in its activities dating from at least the tenth century, was a large, prosperous town, perhaps the most important manufacturing centre in Europe, when Vermeer lived there. East India House, still to be seen on the Oude Delft, was the centre of Holland's great trade with the Far East. Its potteries gave it distinction, and it had at least thirty of these, in which as many as 2000 of Delft's 24,000 inhabitants were employed. In them were made the tiles and faience still sought by collectors. Dr. W. R. Valentiner refers to a plausible tradition to the effect that Vermeer himself had employment as a decorator of tiles and vases. Certain it is that many of these blue and white

EAST



WEST

MAP OF DELFT, 1667

The reader should note that the map shows East, not North, at the top.

After nearly three hundred years, this map, drawn in 1667, apart from incidental changes and the moderate development of the town outside of the Singel Gracht — the canal which then, as now, encircled it and connected it with the rest of Holland — is a satisfactory guide to the Delft of the twentieth century.

In the centre, on the west side of the marketplace (Groote Markt) was, and still is, the Town Hall, erected in 1618 and restored in 1838, which contains paintings by another Delft painter, M. J. Miereveld (1567-1641). In front of the Town Hall, and facing it, is today the statue of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), erected in 1886. Opposite the Town Hall, across the marketplace, is the New Church, erected between 1396 and 1496. Here Vermeer was baptised October 31, 1632, and here Anthony van Leeuwenhoek was baptised the next day. William the Silent is buried in the New Church, which is still the burial place of the royal family of the Netherlands. Its tall tower, 375 feet high, is to be seen in the right centre of Vermeer's *View of Delft*, and today it can still be seen, looming high above the city. From this tower the carillon of forty bells installed by Frans Hemony in 1663 today as of old rings out lovely melodies.

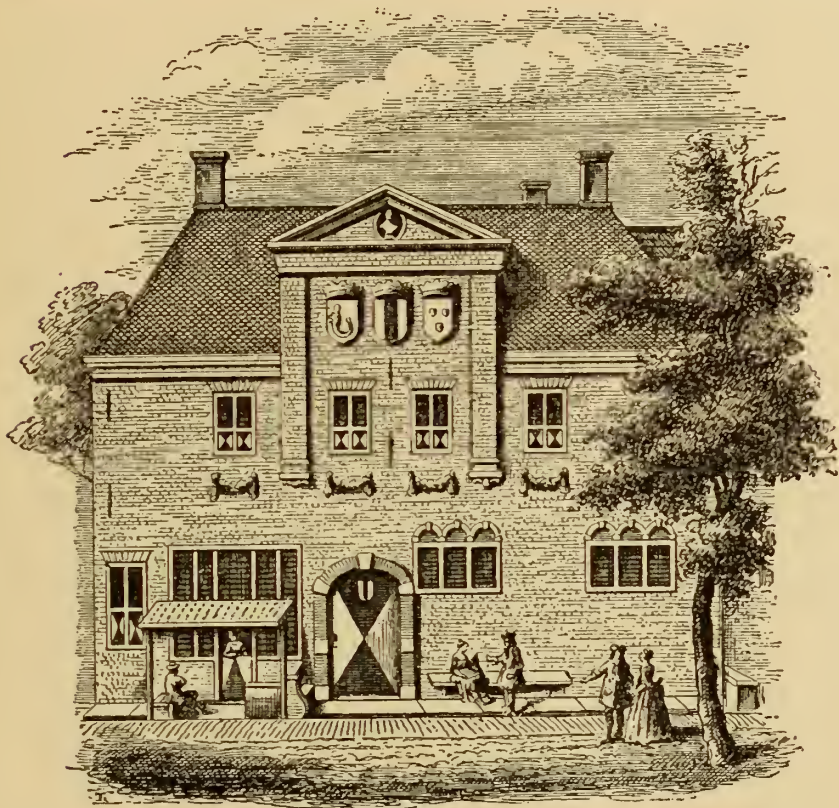
To the northwest of the marketplace, in a square by itself, directly across the Oude Delft from the Prinsenhof, in which William the Silent was assassinated July 10, 1584, is the Old Church, which was already four centuries old in Vermeer's day. Here both Vermeer and his wife are buried, though the spot is unmarked and unknown. The guild-house of the Guild of St. Luke, from 1662 until it was demolished in 1876, was in the Voldersgracht, the first street north of the marketplace. The Oude Langendijk, where, at No. 25, Vermeer lived much of his life and where he died, is the street which can be seen first south of the marketplace.

plaques were adorned with landscapes, some of which are in the style of the best masters of Holland. The name of many a *plateelschilder* (plaque-painter, i.e., designer and painter of Delft ware) and many a *plateelbacker* (master potter) stands in the record of admissions to the Guild of St. Luke. Among these is one who conceivably may have been related to Jan Vermeer: Arij Janse (son of Jan) van der Meer, admitted as a *plateelbacker* on July 20, 1671. He was born in 1638, a son of Jan Adriaensz van der Meer, a ship carpenter. He married in 1655 Cornelia Schoonhove, owner of the Griffin Pottery. He worked in the Chinese fashion.

The Masterbook of the Guild of St. Luke, in two volumes, discovered in the Royal Library at The Hague, contains entries from 1611 to 1715. The Guild consisted of eight bodies of artists and workmen: 1. Painters of every kind, whether in oil or water, pencil, or otherwise, no distinction apparently being made between the artist and the whitewasher or house-painter; 2. Painters and engravers upon glass, glassmakers and glaziers; 3. Master potters and painters upon pottery, the production of which, as has just been indicated, was the largest single industry in Delft; 4. Upholsterers and makers of tapestry; 5. Sculptors in wood, stone, and all other substances; 6. Sheath or case makers; 7. Printers and bookmen; 8. Dealers in paintings and engravings. All the trades which involved the arts of design were here represented.

The Guild had absolute power over every article produced by these trades; no person could execute or cause to be executed any object appertaining to them without the authority of the Syndics (Headmen), and every infraction of their rules was visited by a fine of ten florins, and forfeiture of the object executed. Any unauthorized person attempting to work at any of these trades, even putting in a pane of glass, for instance, was

subject to a fine of twelve florins and confiscation. Nobody could sell a painting, a piece of glass, or a piece of pottery, without being a member of the Guild. Before becoming a master



THE GUILD OF ST. LUKE, DELFT, BUILT 1660-62;
DEMOLISHED IN 1876

craftsman every person had to serve an apprenticeship of six years, the fees for which were one florin six sols for a native, two florins twelve sols for one not of Delft; at the end of every two years the contract had to be renewed until the full term was completed, which involved a fresh payment. The fees for mastership were heavy for the period: for a native of Delft six

florins, for an outsider twelve florins, for the son of a member three florins.

The Guild established a school of design, which all the apprentices were obliged to attend, and held annual meetings for the distribution of prizes to the most efficient. By Vermeer's day the custom had been established for each trade to raise a fund for mutual help to the sick and needy, and to maintain almshouses for those incapable of work.

The output of the Delft potteries reached its peak about the year 1680. During the eighteenth century these gradually declined in importance, until by 1780 they numbered not more than fifteen and in 1790 only ten. By 1808 there were only seven, which by degrees also disappeared. The industry was revived when a factory was established in 1876 by Messrs. Joost Thooft & Labouchère, still in existence.

Vermeer, who, as we have already seen, became a member of the Guild of St. Luke, when he was only twenty-one years old, may very well have had a hand in the erection of the Guild's new building, for which in 1660 permission was granted by the authorities. The new building was placed on the site of the former Chapel of St. Christopher, of the Home for Old Men, on the Voldersgracht, the street next north of, and parallel to, the marketplace. The structure was completed and dedicated in 1662. On its front it had as a crowning adornment in the tympanum of the pediment a bust of Apelles. Below the architrave were three tablets. The central one of these bore the arms of the City of Delft; the tablet to the right, the arms of the Guild and that to the left the arms of Dirk Meerman, a former burgomaster and a Maecenas who presumably had helped to finance the undertaking. Under the four windows of the floor above the ground floor were garlands, or swags, in white stone, bearing the emblems of the four principal arts of the Guild:

those of the painters, the glass makers, the potters and the printers. These are still preserved in the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam. Within the building, as the Delft writer van Bleyswijck described it, in his book on Delft, in 1667, the painters, potters, and workers in glass vied with each other in decorating the great hall and other rooms. The building was demolished in 1876 and a town school erected on its site.

From the year 1662 no strangers were allowed by the Guild to trade at Delft. The Guild had at first four Syndics. Later, with the great increase of members, this number was increased to six — two potters, two glaziers or makers of glass, and two painters.

Whatever professional work Jan Vermeer may or may not have done in connection with the leading industry of Delft, he practised an art which was highly appreciated in his native land, the Netherlands of the middle seventeenth century. His fellow countrymen could afford to buy paintings. Delft shared the prosperity which, since the war with Spain, had made Holland a rich state. The Hollanders had founded their East India trade on the ruins of that of the Spanish and the Portuguese, nor had they, as yet, lost it to the English. Pictures were highly prized, and many a great landowner, many a merchant, was proud of his well-chosen collection.

That the taste for pictures was pretty general in Holland in the seventeenth century may be gathered from the diary of John Evelyn, who recorded on August 13, 1641: "We arrived late at Rotterdam, where was their annual marte or faire, so furnished with pictures (especially landskips and drolleries as they call those clounish representations) that I was amaz'd. Some I bought and sent into England. The reson of this store of pictures and their cheapness proceedes from their want of land

to employ their stock; so it is an ordinary thing to find a common farmer lay out two or 3000 l. for his com'odity. Their houses are full of them, and they vend them at their faires to very great gaines."

Some of the men who bought these works of art had adventured in the India trade and had returned with their pockets lined with gold mohurs and pieces of eight. Some were rough navigators who had stopped Spanish caravels on the high seas and piled gold bullion and silver ingots, and diamonds from Brazil, into their high-pooped ships; or saturnine aristocrats, rich from the happy ending of the Spanish war. These men were not the crude "Dutchmen" whom the contemporary English saw, or imagined; they were, as a rule, gentlemen who tasted curiously every form of aesthetic enjoyment then known. They were capable of going to war over a few precious tulips. They collected rich wares from China and Japan. In their houses were rugs which their merchants in the Russia trade bought at Archangel or, perchance, venturing greatly, at the great fair at Nijni Novgorod. Their seamen, after the Jesuit missions were proscribed in Japan, were the only Europeans permitted to land at Tokio and Nagasaki and these brought home Japanese ceramics, fantastic furniture and now and then perhaps one of the screen paintings loved by the slant-eyed children of the chrysanthemum.

Very large collections of paintings were seldom made in Holland, but each room in a great house was fittingly adorned by some conversation piece in its intricately moulded frame. Or it may be, if the owner had an unconventional taste, there were seen on his walls cocks and hens of a Chinese breed, painted by Melchior d' Hondekoeter, or rare flowers by Jan van Huysum — or even snakes, newts and lizards depicted by the eccentric Otto Marcellis van Schrieck.



Plate 3

VIEW OF DELFT

Jan Vermeer of Delft

VIEW OF DELFT

ROYAL GALLERY OF PAINTINGS, THE MAURITSHUIS, THE HAGUE



Historians of the fine arts comment on the domesticity of Dutch art. It naturally took this character. The Protestant faith, held by most of the people of Holland, discouraged pictorial decoration of the churches. Mural paintings, such as were produced in Italy and Germany for ecclesiastical adornment, had almost no vogue in the Netherlands. Religious pictures were made, but generally they were small. Metsu painted a few of them — and they are his worst. Vermeer delineated Mary and



SEAL OF THE CITY OF DELFT

Martha, and while in this work he did not make himself as ridiculous as poor Metsu did, the picture is one of his least interesting — assuming that it is his.

A notable phenomenon of the land and time of Jan Vermeer was the number of good painters proportionately to the population. Holland had not more than two million inhabitants — and yet what a glorious company of artists thrived among them! Besides the very great painters, their names known to everybody, there were such men as Otto van Veen of Leyden, who taught Rubens; Abraham Bloemaert of Gorcum, who “ painted landscapes and animals in good taste ”; Cornelis van Poelen-

burgh of Utrecht, worthy pupils of whom were Daniel Vertangen and Jan van Haensbergen; Jan Wynants of Haarlem, good at landscape, as was Jan de Heem of Utrecht. Among artists who, like Vermeer, practised the painting of simple folk were Pieter van Laar, the two Ostades and Jan Steen. Worthy landscape painters were Jan Both of Utrecht and Herman Swanevelt of Woerden. Gerard Dou was celebrated, and many liked the work of Jan Fyt, "a painter of beasts." One of the few military painters was Jan Asselijn who drew battles "with a delicate pencil." Willem van Bemmelen of Utrecht was painting landscapes the while. Philip Wouwerman painted battles and hunting pieces, travellers and robbers. As a landscape painter Anthonie Waterloo had a great vogue. Nicolaas Berghem and Paul Potter did cattle, the latter hardly so well as the critic Fromentin has seemed to suppose. Others were Ludolph Backhuysen and his storms at sea; Frans van Mieris, who painted tempests in a teapot; Pieter Cornelisz van Slingelandt, called "hardly less accurate." Albert Cuyp gained fame from his sunlit landscapes; Karel du Jardin and Adriaen van de Velde from similar motives. Arnold van der Neer affected moonlight scenes, and Adriaan van der Werff concocted delicate trifles. Jan van Huysum achieved very wonderful flower pieces whereon drops of water and crawling ants could be seen without a magnifying glass. Pieter van der Hulst of Dordrecht was also a realist in genre painting. Others of Vermeer's time were Cornelis Ketel, Bartholomeus van der Helst, Allart van Everdingen, Willem Kalf, Melchior d'Hondekoeter, Cornelis de Bruyn, the two Houbrakens, Rachel Ruisch, Cornelis Dusart, Cornelis Troost. The country pullulated artists. One wonders how they all lived, especially as Dutch paintings were rarely sold abroad, until much later. The people of Holland loved pictures and bought them as they were able, even persons of small means forming modest collections, — and living with them.

III · *What is known about Jan Vermeer of Delft*

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF DELFT, charming old town of the Netherlands, famous for its glazed earthenware, the last resting-place of the heroic House of Nassau, where William of Orange met his untimely death at the hands of an assassin; the birthplace of Hugo Grotius, scholar and statesman, and of Anthony van Leeuwenhoek, “ first of the microbe hunters ”:

In the book of baptisms at the New Church, among seven baptised on that day: *October 31, 1632* — “ A child Joannes.

“ The father is Reynier son of Jan. The mother, Dingnum, daughter of Balthasar: the witnesses are Pieter Brammer, Jan, son of Heyndrick, and Martha, daughter of Jan.”¹

In the town museum of Delft, situated in the Prinsenhof, in which William the Silent was assassinated, is to be seen an aquarelle which shows the house in which Vermeer was born. The house faced the marketplace, at the northwest corner of the little street which originally led from the marketplace to the Home for Old Men across the Voldersgracht; this street is still called the Oudemanshuissteeg. In the aquarelle the house of the Guild of St. Luke can be seen in the background. Vermeer's birthplace was torn down in 1884 so that the street could be made twice its original width.

¹ The entry in the Doopboek (book of baptisms), in the language of seventeenth century Holland, is as follows: “ Dito 't Joannes/Vader Reynier Janssoon, Moeder Dingnum Balthasars, getuijgen Pr. Brammer, Jan Heijndricxz, Maertge Jans.”

April 5, 1653 — “Johannes, son of Reynier Vermeer, celibate, living at the market place — to Catharina Bolenes, maiden, from the same locality.”²

Maria Tins, Vermeer's wife's mother, was the widow of Reynier Bolnes, a brickmaker at Gouderack near Gouda. The family from which she came was well-to-do, according to the records of property ownership in which the names of Maria Tins Bolnes and Catharina Bolnes appear.

From the Masterbook of the Guild of St. Luke, Delft (in the Royal Library at The Hague) his record as a new member received into the Guild as master painter:

December 29, 1653 — “And for the right of mastership he has paid 1 florin, 10 stuyvers — still owing 4 florins, 10 stuyvers.” “On the 24th of July 1656 he has paid in full.”³

The Masterbook states that in 1662 Vermeer was made one of the “Headmen,” or Syndics, of the Guild, for the first time, serving two years. Again he filled the same honourable and responsible office during the years 1670 and 1671. Twice he was chosen president.

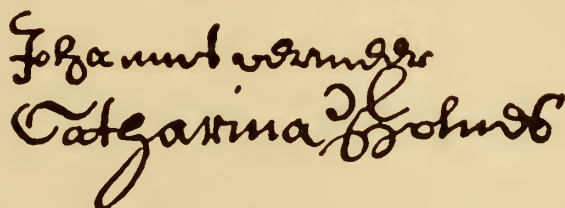
As showing with whom Vermeer was associated in the government of a guild whose membership included painters, sculptors, printers, potters and other artist craftsmen, the following entries are pertinent: 1662, “The Board of Governors (or Syndics) for this year were Cornelis de Man, Arent van Sanen, Aelbrecht Keijser, Johannes Vermeer, Jan Dirckse van der Laen, Ghijsbrecht Cruick”; 1663, “the Syndics for this year were Joannes Vermeer, Arent van Sanen, Gijsbrecht Cruick,

² The entry thus translated runs as follows: “Den 5en Apprille 1653: Johannes Reyniersz. Vermeer J. M. oft Marctvelt Catharina Bolenes J. D. mede aldaar.”

³ The record, translated as above, stands in the archives thus: “Schilder, den 29 december 1653, Johannis Vermeer heft hem doen aenteijkenen als meester schilder, sijnde burger, en heeft op sijn meester geldt betaelt 1 gul. 10 stuyv. rest 4 gul 10 st. . . . Den 24 July 1656 in alles betaelt.”

Anthonij Pallemedes, Frans Janse van der Fijn, Jan Gerritse van der Houven"; 1670 "the Syndics were Louijs Elsevier, Michael van den Houck, Gijsbrecht Kruyck, Joannes Vermeer, Jasper Serrot, Jacob Kerton"; 1671 "the Syndics were Joannes Vermeer, Jasper Serrot, Jacob Corton, Cornelis de Man, Cijbrant van der Laen, Claes Jansz. Metschert."

Dutch records of Vermeer's day, subjected to intensive research by various archivists, have disclosed facts about the



The image shows two handwritten signatures in dark ink. The top signature is 'Johannes Vermeer' in a cursive script. The bottom signature is 'Catharina Bolnes' also in a cursive script, with a large, decorative initial 'C'.

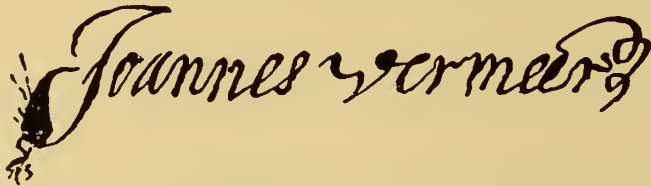
painter and members of his family which throw light on his circumstances and standing in the community.

On November 30, 1655, for instance, about two years after their marriage, Johannis Reyniersz Vermeer, painter, and Catharina Reyniers Bolnes, his wife, borrowed from Pieter Claesz van Ruyven 200 florins at 4½ per cent. interest. They themselves a fortnight later were obliged to come to the aid of Vermeer's father who had borrowed 250 florins at 5½ per cent. on a note endorsed by Captain Johan van Santen. The money lender, not satisfied with his security, on December 14, 1655, required the names of the painter and his wife, Catharina Bolnes, as additional security.

Just two years later, on November 30, 1657, Johannes Reyniersz Vermeer, painter, and Catharina Reyniers Bolnes, signed a note of 200 florins before the notary J. van Ophoven, "on account of money lent." The record indicates that both were literate; their signatures are reproduced above.

Johannes Vermeer, artist painter of Delft, on July 19, 1671, appeared and acknowledged payment of an inheritance from

his sister, Geertruijt Vermeer, one-half of 648 florins which was due him from his brother-in-law, Anthony van der Wiell. Before Notary G. van Assendelft he signed himself " Joannes vermeer " in large script, as here reproduced, the character of his handwriting appearing to have changed in fifteen years.



On January 14, 1672, Johannes Vermeer leased to Johannes van der Meer his house called "Mechelen," — the house where he was born and which he presumably inherited from his father — on the north side of the marketplace at the southwest corner of the Oudemanshuissteeg, for six years, at an annual rental of 180 florins, as witnessed by F. Boogert at Delft. The former signature is clearly that of Vermeer, the painter; the latter signature presumably that of one of the several other Jan van der Meers who were his contemporaries at Delft.



Before Notary A. Lock at Amsterdam, on January 25, 1674, Hendrick de Schepper, living at Amsterdam, holding an assign-

ment of Johannes Vermeer, painter, of Delft (this being a conveyance signed at Amsterdam before Outgers, notary, on July 21, 1673) explained that he had sold securities, in a transaction of which the first item is missing but the second item mentions bonds of the united nation of Holland and West Friesland: one of 300 florins; one of 500 florins. This notation may reveal that at least once Jan Vermeer left Delft to transact business at Amsterdam. Travel in Holland seems to have been easily carried on by water transportation.

Johannes Vermeer, master painter at Delft, having power of attorney from his mother-in-law, Maria Tins, widow of Reynier Bolnes, received on her behalf, March 5, 1675, an inheritance at Gouda. The document, signed "Marya Thins," and witnessed by Pieter Roemer, master glassmaker, shows that the beneficiary had complete confidence in Vermeer. It states: "To-day, the fifth of March, 1675, appeared before me, Cornelis Pietersz Bleiswyck, notary public, the honourable madam Maria Tins, widow of Mr. Reynier Bollenes, mother and guardian of her son Willem Bolnes, and empowered Johannes Vermeer, her son-in-law, master painter, to represent her: first in respect of the estate of the late Henrick Hensbeeck of Gouda (to act in the matter of division of the property and to receive the moneys coming to Willem Bolnes); and at the same time to receive and make payments from the annual income of her son Willem Bolnes, therein to administer affairs as a good administrator is bound to do; that she who appears is entirely confident of her son-in-law." Authorization of this power of attorney preceded very shortly Jan Vermeer's death. After the death of Willem Bolnes in the following spring a tangle had to be straightened out by proper agreement between the respective executors of the two estates: Vermeer's and Bolnes's.

Vermeer in July, 1675, shortly before his death, borrowed

1000 florins, as witnessed before Notary J. Hellerus at Amsterdam. This debt was assumed on April 2, 1678, by Maria Tins, the mother-in-law.

And now, from the archives of Delft, another record, — the last a man can have:

December 15, 1675 — “Jan Vermeer, artist painter — living on the Old Long Dyke — (buried) at the Old Church.” A marginal note mentions eight minor children, i.e. under 23.⁴

The contents of Vermeer’s household at the time of his death are interestingly revealed by the inventory⁵ which was first printed in its entirety in *Oud-Holland* in 1885, in an article by Dr. A. Bredius, who was for many years the director of the Royal Gallery of Paintings, the Mauritshuis, The Hague.

The house on the Old Long Dyke contained paintings not

⁴ This following notation, in old Dutch, is found in the register of “Personen die binnen deser Stad Delf overladen ende in de Oude Kerck als oock daer buijten begraven sijn tsedert den 19 Julij 1671”:

“15 December 1675

“Jan Vermeer, kunstschilder aen de Oude Langedijk in de kerk.” . . . In the margin: “8 Me. j. kind.”

⁵ In the old Dutch original this inventory reads as follows:

“*In ’t voorhuys*: Een freuytschilderytge, een zeetje, een lantschapie. — Een stuckie schildery door FABRITIUS.

“*In de groote zaal*: Een schildery sijnde een boere schuyr. Nog een schildery. — Twee schildery-tronijen van FABRITIUS. — De conterfeytsels van S^r. VERMEER zal^{re}. vader en moeder. — Een getee kent wapen van den voorn. S^r. VERMEER, met een ebbe lijst. — Meubels, harnas, stormhoed en kleinigheden. — Onder linnen en wolle: Een turcx Mantal van den voorn. S^r. VERMEER zal^r. — Voorts kleederen en huisraad.

“*In de binnenkeuken*: Een groote schildery, sijnde Christus aen ’t Cruys. — Twee Trony schilderyen gedaen by HOOGHSTRATEN. — Een schildery daerin allerley vrouwentuijch. — Een van Veronica. — 2 Tronyen geschildert op sijn Turcx.) — Een Zeetje. — Een waerin een bas met een dootshoofd. — 7 ellen goutleer aen de muyr.

“*Op de kelderkamer*: Een Christus aent Cruys, een vrou met een ketting aen — enz. alles zonder naam der schilders.

“*Op de voorkamer*: Een rotting met een ivoren knop daerop. — 2 schilderseezels, drye paletten, 6 paneelen, 10 schilderdoucken, drye bondels allerhande slach van printen, een lessenaer en rommelingh.”





only by Vermeer but also by his early associate, and perhaps teacher, Carel Fabritius, by Samuel Hoogstraten, and works which appear on the wall in several of Vermeer's pictures.

The inventory shows that in the vestibule of the Vermeer home hung a fruit picture, a seascape, a landscape, and a painting by Fabritius.

In the large hall were a farmyard scene, conjectured by Dr. Bredius to be perhaps by van der Poel; another painting; the likenesses of Vermeer's father and mother; a coat-of-arms with an ebony frame; furniture, armour, headpieces and small objects; body-linen and woollens; a Turkish textile belonging to Vermeer; various pieces of clothing and household objects.

In the kitchen were a large painting depicting Christ on the Cross; two paintings of heads by Hoogstraten; a still life; a Veronica; two heads painted with Turkish accessories; a seascape; a stringed instrument and a bass viol with case; seven yards of gilt leather on the wall, presumably such as appears in the *Love Letter* at Amsterdam and the *Allegory of the New Testament*, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. The "Christus aen 't Cruys" of this section of the inventory is supposed to be the picture which hangs on the wall in the last-named painting.

In the basement room were listed a Christ on the Cross, a woman with a necklace and others, all without the painters' names.

In the front room the inventory showed a walking stick with ivory head, two painters' easels, six panels, ten canvases, three bundles of prints, a desk and pieces of lumber.

An appended notation refers to other paintings and studio furnishings belonging to the estate: a Mars and Apollo; eight other pictures; family portraits; one of The Three Kings and one of Christ's Mother; eleven other pictures; a stone table with glass top.

The inventory was signed before J. van Veen, notary, at Delft, on February 29, 1676, by Catherina Bolnes.

The probability that the house in which Vermeer died and in which the inventory of his possessions was made still stands was advanced in a study made by Mr. Eduard Houbolt which in March, 1924, was published in the monthly journal of the United Oil Companies of the Netherlands.

Starting from a notation in the inventory which shows the house to have stood on the Old Long Dyke at the corner of the Moolepoort ("op den hoek van de Molepoort"), Mr. Houbolt believes that this must have been the west corner and that this in all probability is the house now standing there, though in modified form. The present arrangement of the interior, it is observed by Mr. Houbolt, seems to accord with the one suggested in the inventory. The house, numbered 25, is small, with only three rooms and a hallway on the ground floor and three on the floor above, besides a basement and an attic. Perhaps in Vermeer's time there may have been a wing extending into a garden which today is no more. At best, with his numerous paintings and the other paraphernalia of the artist, — not to mention his many children — his must have been a crowded household. One may surmise that he painted some of his pictures in the homes of his patrons.

Several other entries in the Delft archives concern members of Vermeer's family. It may be pertinent to note here that consistency in the spelling and the use of capitals in the old Dutch names is difficult, since these names are so variously written in the records.

The name Vermeer or van der Meer, used more or less interchangeably, was common at Delft. Today, indeed, it is a common name in Holland. And it is a matter of curious interest to note that Mr. T. H. v. d. Meer, optician, occupies (1936) the

house on the next corner beyond that on which Jan Vermeer's birthplace once stood, as one walks along the north side of the marketplace towards the Town Hall.

The painter's father, besides the cognomen of "Vos," which appears in several signatures, was called van der Meer. A deed of August 12, 1651, states that Andries Boogaert, notary, of Delft, gives notice that before him (to give him power of attorney) has appeared Reijnier van der Meer, otherwise known as Vos, innkeeper, living on the north side of the marketplace, "well known to me, the notary."

The artist son quite certainly preferred the form Vermeer. This appears in the signatures on his paintings and elsewhere. There is also possible evidence of his preference in a document of July 13, 1670, before the notary Frans Boogert, recording a division of property, on which the first name recorded was apparently that of "Johannes van der Meer." It can still be seen that this was blotted out, according to the article "Vermeeriana" by Mr. L. G. N. Bouricius in *Oud-Holland*, 1925, and that in its place was written "Vermeer." It is plausibly conjectured that either the notary through forgetfulness made a mistake which he himself corrected or that the artist insisted on having his name spelled as he liked it.

It further is not improbable that the artist, even though his father was sometimes inscribed "van der Meer," was particular to be "Vermeer" in order not to be confused with the several other Jan van der Meers who were his contemporaries at Delft. The records contain references to a Jan van der Meer, apothecary, living in 1640 on the Voldersgracht, whom, as we have already seen, Sir Philip Skippon and his companions called upon, when they visited Delft in 1663; of a Jan Jansz van der Meer, dwelling in 1647 in Out Beyerlant; a Jan Cornelisz van der Meer, hat maker, whose house in 1648 was in the Buitenketel-poort; a Jan Reyers van der Meer who in 1665 inherited prop-

erty; a schoolmaster, Johannes van der Meer, mentioned in 1680.

One of the few available references to Reynier Vermeer, the painter's father, indicates that he may have been a collector of works of art, perhaps his son's pictures as well as those of other artists. In the Rijks Museum, Amsterdam, according to Mr. E. W. Moes in an article in *Oud-Holland*, is an album in which fifty-six drawings in black chalk have been pasted. These seem to be by one hand and to consist of preliminary sketches for paintings. Appended to one of the drawings (No. 5) is a fragment of a list, presumably meant to give information concerning the whereabouts of certain pictures. Next to the bottom of the list is the name of Reynier Vermeer, and just below his that of Leonard Bramer, painter of Delft and one of the Syndics of St. Luke's Guild, whom some believe to have been Jan Vermeer's first teacher. These drawings are found by Mr. Moes to be in the general style of the middle seventeenth century. Some writers have thought that Reynier Vermeer was not a person of social importance in Delft; this impression might be confirmed by the phraseology of the list just mentioned in which all the eleven owners of pictures except Vermeer and Bramer have a distinguishing title: either "heer," "monsr." or "capitein."

Concerning this question of the occupations followed by Reijnier Jansz. van der Meer, or Vos, these were, apparently, those of dealer in objects of art, worker in or on velvet as well as inn keeper. This perhaps significant information was also developed by Mr. Bouricius in his article in *Oud-Holland*.

It also is possible, if not fully established, that shortly before the artist's birth the father became a member of the Guild of St. Luke, in the Masterbook of which appears an entry translated as follows: "On October 13, 1631, Reijnier Vos, or Reijnier van der Minne, has qualified as a master art dealer, being a citizen, paying the full six florins." Mr. Bouricius thinks it

likely that this was the painter's father. The name "van der Minne" does not look reasonable as it stands. It is said to be so written quite clearly in the record book, but there is a possibility that the secretary either heard it incorrectly or took it down from somebody else's illegible scribble. If, then, this is Reijnier van der Meer, a man engaged in buying and selling works of art, he would naturally be inclined to rear his son to an artistic calling, and the art business with which there is some evidence that Vermeer sought to add to his income in his last years may have been one which he learned, or inherited, from his father.

By way of controverting the possibility that Reijnier Vos was the same person as Reijnier van der Meer, father of Jan Vermeer, the painter or, if so, was not a member of the Guild, the fact may be mentioned that our painter, as we have seen, paid the full fee for membership, six florins, even though he was three and a half years in completing the payments, whereas the fee for sons of members was only three florins. The latter rate may, however, have come into effect at a later date.

Reijnier van der Meer's probable connection with a textile trade has been discovered from an entry in a volume of the national archives collection at The Hague. This records taxable houses at Delft from 1640 to 1813. One house is listed as that of "Reijnier Vosch, velvet-worker, now belonging to his son, Johannes Vermeer" — presumably that on the Oudemanshuissteeg.

The date of his father's death, which must have occurred before 1670, is unknown, but the following burial notice⁶ establishes the year and month of his mother's decease, and the fact that she lived in the "Street of the Flemings": "Buried in the New Church February 13, 1670, Dyna Baltens, widow of Reynier Vermeer in the Vlamingstraet."

⁶ "Begraven in de Nieuwe Kerk 13 Februarij 1670 Dyna Baltens, weduwa van Reynier Vermeer in de Vlamingstraet."

It is known that Catharina Bolnes (or Bolenes), Jan Vermeer's widow, had difficulties in connection with the settlement of his estate and that she outlived him by more than twelve years.

The burial records⁷ of the Old Church show that she was buried in the church January 2, 1688; an appended statement that she had twelve bearers is believed to indicate that she was a person of standing: "12 Dragers, 5 m. j. k."; 12 bearers, and 5 children under age, i.e. below 23 years. The house where she died has been identified as that which stands next to the north beside the office of the *Delft Courant*, on the Verwersdijk, not far from the point at which the Voldersgracht, proceeding eastward, changes its name, so to speak, to Vlamingstraat.

Evidence of the widow's financial difficulties is seen in a record which sheds light not only on her circumstances but also on the possible identification of two of her husband's paintings. Gerard van Assendelft, notary, of Delft, records the fact that, on January 27, 1676, "Catharina Bolnes, widow of Johannes Vermeer, in his life an artist painter at Delft, appeared before me and made known that she had sold and turned over to Hendrick van Buyten, two pictures, painted by the said Vermeer: one representing two persons one of whom sits to write a letter; the other a person playing on a guitar. And acknowledges to be paid therefor the sum of 617 florins, six stuyvers, which she, the person appearing, owed the said van Buyten for bread delivered to her, which account, for this value received, is annulled and written off."

Of these two paintings, the first is generally believed to be the *Love Letter* of the Beit Collection, and the second either the *Iveagh* or the *Johnson Guitar Player*, discussion of which will be found on pp. 144-52.

⁷ "2 Januari 1688. Catharina Bolnits Wed. van Johan Vermeer aen de Verwersdijck in de blauwe hant, in de kerck."

Jan Vermeer's estate being apparently encumbered with debts, "their Worships the Sheriffs of the Town of Delft do hereby appoint Anthonij Leeuwenhouck to be Trustee for the estate and property of Catharina Bolnes, widow of the late Johannes Vermeer (in his lifetime Master Painter) and petitioner for a writ of insolvency, for what he remained possessed of."

Writing about this appointment in his monumental work, "Antony van Leeuwenhoek and 'His Little Animals,'" Dr. Clifford Dobell, F.R.S., says: "Obreen [the compiler of the Delft archives] has inferred that Leeuwenhoek's appointment as administrator of Vermeer's estate was one of the 'pickings' to which he was entitled by virtue of his office as Chamberlain. Obreen may be right: but it seems hardly likely that Leeuwenhoek derived any profit from his trusteeship of the affairs of an insolvent family, and the extant records (as published) show only that he met with worries and legal difficulties in the discharge of his duty. To me the incident appears rather to indicate that Leeuwenhoek may have been a personal friend of the Vermeers, though it also shows clearly that he himself must have held a solid position as a citizen of Delft at that date; since it is inconceivable that the Sheriffs could have nominated anybody but a respected fellow-townsmen to disentangle Vermeer's involved finances. For Vermeer—though soon forgotten and only recently rediscovered—was then rightly regarded as a great artist and ornament of the Town, and his wife apparently had well-to-do connexions."

Anthony van Leeuwenhoek has long been called the inventor of the microscope, although, according to Dr. Dobell, he used only the simple lens or magnifying glass. To the public in general he has not been known at all as the important figure in the history of science that he was. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that not until Mr. Paul de Kruif published his "Mi-

crobe Hunters" in 1926 and made an erudite subject as popular almost as a mystery-thriller did van Leeuwenhoek's name come to have a place of its own in public consciousness. Mr. de Kruif called him "first of the microbe hunters" and just as in the case of that other long unknown man of Delft the searcher for truth in science like the searcher for truth in art became at long last a figure glowing in the light of fame.

Vermeer and van Leeuwenhoek were born in the same month and the same year, October, 1632, both were born in Delft, the names of both appear on the same page of the book of baptisms of the New Church in Delft — van Leeuwenhoek's the day after Vermeer's, one of the two recorded on that date — and they were quite probably friends.

Van Leeuwenhoek came of a family of basket makers and brewers. At first intended for government service he became at sixteen apprentice in an Amsterdam draper's shop. At twenty-one, at home again in Delft, he set up his own shop as a draper. During the next twenty years he married, became a widower and married again. He became chamberlain to the Sheriffs of Delft at a salary of about 300 florins a year. He resigned his post after serving thirty-nine years and his salary was continued until his death. With a degree of versatility not too common in any age or place he developed an early fondness for grinding lenses, improving on what he learned from the best spectacle makers, and studying the craft of the goldsmiths and silversmiths to find out how to make mountings for his lenses. Then he studied everything he could turn his lenses on until when, in the days of Charles II, the British Royal Society came into being, he was, at the suggestion of his fellow townsman, Reijnier de Graaf, invited to write the Society a letter about his discoveries. So he wrote concerning "A Specimen of some Observations made by a Microscope contrived by Mr. Leeuwenhoek, concerning Mould upon the Skin, Flesh, etc.; the Sting

of a Bee, etc.” Finally there came a day when van Leeuwenhoek turned his lenses on a drop of rain water and in it saw what he described as “wretched beasties.” “This janitor of Delft,” writes Mr. de Kruif, “had stolen upon and peeped into a fantastic subvisible world of little things, creatures that had lived, had bred, had battled, had died, completely hidden from and unknown to all men from the beginning of time. It was this invisible, insignificant, but implacable — and sometimes friendly — world that Leeuwenhoek had looked into for the first time of all men of all countries. This was Leeuwenhoek’s day of days.” The Royal Society made him a fellow.

This was only a few years after Vermeer’s death, at a time when the records show that the painter’s friend was busying himself not only with his correspondence with his new colleagues and pursuing his studies with the hundreds of lenses he continued to grind but also, as we have seen, with the affairs of the meagre estate left to the painter’s widow to support her many children. Most of van Leeuwenhoek’s children, by both his wives, died early. Only one, a daughter by his second wife, grew up; she survived her father, and, never marrying, cared for him until he died. Who knows but that his conscientious care of the little that his friend left in worldly goods may have been given with particular affection on his part because of his delight in his friend’s children?

Van Leeuwenhoek’s studies continued through a long life. When Vermeer died, the artist and the scientist were both forty-three; the scientist lived nearly fifty years more, dying August 28, 1723, at ninety-one. As Mr. de Kruif remarks, “he made a hundred amazing discoveries. In the tail of a little fish stuck head first into a glass tube he saw for the first time of all men the capillary blood vessels through which the blood goes from the arteries to the veins — so he completed the Englishman Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of the blood. The years

went by and all Europe knew about him. Peter the Great of Russia came in 1698 to pay his respects to him, and the Queen of England journeyed to Delft to look at the wonders to be seen through the lenses of his microscopes. He exploded countless superstitions for the Royal Society, and aside from Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle (founder of the science of chemistry) he was the most famous of their members." Fortunate Delft — to produce in half a century such men as Hugo Grotius, the Mierevelds, Jan Steen, van Leeuwenhoek and Jan Vermeer, in international law, in science, and in art, and to bring into being a great industry of the arts which sent Delft ware through Europe and down the centuries as a standard for making useful things beautifully!

In addition to making over two of her husband's pictures to the baker, van Buyten, in payment of a debt for bread, we find that the widow was helped in the discharge of other debts of the estate by disposal of another painting, for we learn that on February 24, 1676, there appeared before Notary J. Vos, of The Hague, Catharina Bolnes, widow of Johan Vermeer, living at Delft, and explained that, unable to pay anything that she owed, both for herself and in her capacity as householder and also as guardian of her children sired by the said Vermeer, her husband, she had given over in full and free ownership to her mother Maria Pins (*sic*), widow of Reynier Bollenes, a piece of painting painted by her said husband in which is depicted *The Painter's Art*, together with her right to the revenues, actual and expected, from about seven acres of land situated in Out-Beyerlant. The picture is commonly believed to be the *Painter's Studio* of the Czernin Collection, Vienna, perhaps No. 3 of the 1696 sale.

That all was not serene with the circumstances of this transfer would appear from the fact that Maria Thins (Tins), widow

THE BOARDER
 (MONTAGNE MUSEUM, 1871) BY J. M. W. TURNER

...and all Europe knew about him. Peter the Great of Russia came to visit to pay his respects to him, and the Queen of England employed in Delft to look at the wonders to be seen through the lenses of his microscopes. He explored countless experiments for the Royal Society and made from Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle the founder of the science of chemistry; he was the most famous of those painters. Fortunate Delft — reproduce in half a century such men as Hugo Grotius, the scholar, Jansz, the astronomer and Jan Vermeer, a national hero, in science and in art, and to bring into being a great industry of the arts which now Delft went through Europe and drawn the attention to a standard for making useful things beautifully.

Jan Vermeer of Delft

In addition to many **THE READER** her husband's pictures to the book *sometimes called A GIRL READING A LETTER*, we find that the widow **RIJKS MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM** of other delits of the genre by disposal of another painting. But we learn that on February 24, 1678, there appeared before Notary J. Vos, of The Hague, Catharina Pauw, widow of Jan Vermeer, living in Delft, and explained that, unable to pay anything that she owed, both for herself and in her capacity as householder and also as guardian of her children sired by the said Vermeer, her husband, she had given over in full and free ownership to her mother Maria Pijn (the widow of Reynier Bollenes, a piece of painting painted by her said husband in which is depicted *The Painter's Art*, together with her right to the revenues, actual and expected, from some seven acres of land situated in Dordrecht. The picture is commonly believed to be the *Painter's Studio* of the Czernin Collection, Vienna, perhaps No. 5 of the 1600 sale.

That all was not serene with the circumstances of the transfer would appear from the fact that Maria Thiny [Text on Page 174]



of Reynier Bolnes, appeared before Notary J. Vos, of The Hague, on this same 24th of February, 1676, and stated that in accordance with the deed of transfer, "my daughter, Catharina Bolnes, diminishing not at all what she owes me, both for herself and in her capacity as widow and householder and as guardian of her children of whom Johannes Vermeer was the father, has in full and free ownership given over, assigned and conveyed a certain piece of painting, painted by the aforesaid Vermeer in which is represented *The Painter's Art*, of which deed of transfer and conveyance M. Anthony Leeuwenhoek, as administrator of the estate of the aforesaid Vermeer, was given a signed copy. And notwithstanding this, the aforesaid Leeuwenhoek in his aforesaid capacity proposes by posting of printed notices (one of which has been shown to me) to sell at public auction on March 15, 1677, at St. Luke's Guildhall the aforesaid picture, conveyed to me as is stated above.

"So shall the notary, heretofore consulted, (Cornelis van Oudendijck, of Delft) inform the aforementioned Leeuwenhoek in my name that I will not permit the aforementioned picture to be sold by him, since it might mean lessening of what is due me, unless he, the seller, shall stipulate that money belonging to me shall not be kept out or spent in diminution of my proceeds." This was granted at The Hague on March 12, 1677.

The notary appends his report on this transaction, as follows: "In pursuance of the above charges I, the subscribing notary, betook myself to the presence of Antony Leeuwenhoek and read before him the said charges, to which he gave reply that he had been able to secure possession of the said picture only through process and by conveyance from Annetge Stevens and that he had had to pay for it the sum of 324 florins, besides the cost of the process; that he for his part (notwithstanding these charges) was going forward with the sale; and that if the one

making the charges proved to have sole right to the picture, she could plead her case for preference."

Catharina Bolnes, living, on April 30, 1676, on the Hoogen Road, Delft, testified: "Your petitioner is left with eleven living children because her husband during the war with the King of France, for now several years past, was able to earn very little and often almost nothing, and the art business which he had purchased and which he was carrying on had met with very great loss under his hands." The petitioner explained that she was unable to satisfy all her creditors and asked for the privilege of cessation of payments. Whereupon an order for such cessation was issued with *lettres de committimus* (chancery order appointing a court to take care of the affair).

Shortly after the issuance of this mandate for a moratorium on payments, Hendrick van der Eem, from his title of "Heer Mr." presumably prominent, an advocate, of the Hook of Holland, assumed the guardianship over Vermeer's minor children.

Van Leeuwenhoek soon after appeared as the widow Vermeer's representative in legal proceedings connected with settlement of the estate of her late brother, Willem Bolnes, which throw some light on the family circumstances. Slightly condensed but with preservation of much of its quaint legal phraseology, an account of this settlement of a disagreement among relatives follows :

On November 20, 1676, in accordance with verbal instructions from the aldermen of the town of Delft, Adriaen van der Hoeff and Nicolaes van Assendelft, members of the board, met as a special committee with Anthony Hensius as their secretary, to reach a decision in the case of Pieter de Bie, attorney, representing Maria Tins, widow of the late Reinier Bolnes, this representation having been authorized on April 28, 1676, in the

presence of Hendrik Ter Beecq van Coesveld, notary public, and other witnesses, of the one part; and Anthony van Leeuwenhoek, conservator of the estate of Chatharina (*sic*) Bolnes, widow of the late Johannes Vermeer, who is the one and only heir of the estate of Willem Bolnes, her deceased brother, assisted by Floris van der Werf, his attorney, of the other part.

Before the committee above named Pieter de Bie exhibited bills of expenses incurred by Maria Tins on account of her son who was confined by illness at the home of Harmanus Taeling, Delft, and who died in March, 1676. It appeared that the said Willem had property which came to him through the death of Hendrik Claesz. Hunsbeecq, a cousin. The gist of a quite involved agreement was that Maria Tins, taking over both assets and liabilities of her son's estate, undertook to pay her daughter, through van Leeuwenhoek, the conservator, the sum of 500 guilders, together with 60 guilders to cover the costs of the trial and the examination and checking of accounts. It was likewise agreed that all differences between the two parties arising from the administration of the estate of Willem Bolnes should end, both undertaking to consult the court for settlement of any further difficulties, going to one or all of the following committee: Christaen van Vliet, Floris van der Werf, Philips de Bries and Johan Bogaerd, attorneys of the court, to ask for a decision which shall be final. An apparently happy outcome of this legal tangle appears in the records of the full board, as follows: "The aldermen of the town of Delft, having seen and examined the above accord and contract, have approved it with praise herewith. Acted Nov. 25, 1676."

Troubles arising from the settlement of Jan Vermeer's estate presently brought Catharina, his widow, again before a committee of the Delft aldermen, the inquiry concerning especially 26 paintings belonging to the estate which in February, 1677,

were at Haarlem in possession of Joh. Columbier (believed to be Jan, or Johannes, Coelenbier or Coelembier, painter, of Haarlem), these works conceivably including some or all of the 21 sold later at Amsterdam, in 1696. The story in outline, as it appears in the *Kamerboek*, is as follows:

On February 2, 1677, in accordance with a written notice from the aldermen of the town of Delft, there appeared before Adriaen van der Hoef and Nicolaes van Assendelft, aldermen, sitting as judges, and with Hendrik Vockestaert as secretary, Anthony van Leeuwenhoek, conservator of the estate of the late Johannes Vermeer, master painter, as claimant, assisted by Floris van der Werf, his counsel, of the one part; and Jannetge Stevens, defendant, assisted by Steven van der Werf, master mason, her cousin, and Philips de Bries, her attorney, of the other part. These parties through intercession of the commissioners and upon approval of the board of aldermen, contracted and agreed that the claimant above named would pay to the defendant the sum of 342 guilders as a complete payment of the 442 guilders which the defendant still had to receive from the estate of Jan Vermeer (of which the defendant might at any time be required to take oath as to its correctness); in return for which the defendant promised to turn over to the claimant at her earliest convenience the said 26 paintings belonging to the estate and at the moment in the custody of Johannes Columbier, living at Haarlem; this transfer to be made on condition that the defendant promise that the said paintings will at any time net at public auction for the benefit of the estate the sum of 500 guilders, for which amount the said Steven van der Werven would go bond. This understanding was confirmed by the full board as follows: ⁸

⁸ The actual wording in the Dutch language of the resolution confirming the widow's right to recover 26 of Jan Vermeer's paintings is as follows:

"Op huyden den 5 febr: 1677 ter Camere van Haer Agtb. de Heeren Schepenen der Stad Delft van den inhoudevan het bovenstaende verbael berigt ende com-

"Today, the 5th of February, 1677, in the room of the board of aldermen of the town of Delft, having been informed of the above report and communication, it has been approved by the honourable board as it is recorded herewith.

"Passed on the day and year as above."

On February 1, 1678, at Delft, before the honourable Mr. Schepenen, Anthony Leeuwenhoek, administrator of the insolvent goods and chattels of Catharina Bolnes, widow and housekeeper of the late Johannes Vermeer, in his life a painter in this city, declared that he empowered Nicolaes Straffintvelt, notary at Gouda, in his name to make lawful transfer of a third part of a house and land with bleaching field behind it in the Peper-street at Gouda as well as a third part of four and one-half acres of land lying in Wilnis below Gouda, accruing to the said Catharina Bolnes by bequest from the estate of the late Jan Bolnes, her uncle.

On November 19, 1682, Mr. Hendrick van der Eem, guardian of the children of Catharina Bolnes, widow of Jan van der Meer, of Delft, authorized Anthony van Leeuwenhoek in his capacity as administrator to sell two redeemable rentals at Gouda: one of 48 florins per year, redeemable with 1200 florins; one of eight florins, redeemable with 210 florins.

In very long wills — September 25, 1676, and January 24, 1680 — Maria Tins refers, as living at The Hague at the house of Mme. Aleidis Magdalena and Cornelia Clementia van Rosendaël in Ida Street, to "heiresses," the children of the late Johannes Vermeer and her daughter, Catharina Bolnes. "These shall have 1/6th part," but under conditions that are deciphered

municatie, gedaen wesende is het selvige in het regard van Haer Agtb. geapprobeert soals hetselvige geapprobeert wert bij desen.

"Actum ten dage en Jare als boven."

with difficulty as the text has several lacunae. Pieter de Bie, attorney, at The Hague, was executor.

Several documents witnessed before two notaries at The Hague, H. T. van Coesfelt and J. Boogert, concern the settlement of Jan Vermeer's estate. They confirm the belief that Maria Tins (often spelled Thins), Vermeer's mother-in-law, was a woman of means. They also may indicate that the necessity existed of refuting an allegation to the effect that not everything was open and aboveboard in the disposition of the affairs of this insolvent estate. Thus on December 11, 1676, Maria Tins made an express declaration to the effect that no one of the possessions of her daughter or her son-in-law, Johannes Vermeer, had been sequestered *in fraudem creditorum*. Two years later, on November 28, 1678, she empowered Boogert as attorney to protect her interests as a preferred plaintiff (*Eyscheresse van preferentie*) against the other creditors of the late Johannes Vermeer.

The painter's mother-in-law possessed about 40 acres of land below Out-Beyerlant which yielded 486 florins a year. On January 24, 1680, she agreed to encumber it with a mortgage. The executors of her will shall be required to care for her daughter, Catharina Bolnes, in case she herself cannot supply her with sufficient means of living. They shall pay her the money at their discretion by the month or quarterly.

It appears certain that Vermeer's wife's mother continued to help. Johannes Vermeer, the oldest son, continued to be a student, notwithstanding all his mother's troubles. She had to borrow on his account on July 16, 1681, from Pieter van Bleeck 400 florins, and on July 28, only a few days later, 400 florins from François Smagge at five per cent. and 4½ per cent., respectively.

In 1705 Maria Tins, the mother and grandmother, of many

responsibilities, died. She must have been a very old woman. It is of record that after her death "Heer and Mr." Pieter de Bie, attorney, of the Hook of Holland, in behalf of the children of the late Johannes Vermeer, heirs of the late Juffrouw Maria Thins (*sic*), their grandmother, authorized a notary at Schoonhoven to lease six acres of land at that place.

That Jan Vermeer's wife came of a family of means is further evidenced by entries in the Delft archives of dates long after her death. These concern the request of children and grandchildren of Vermeer, the painter, to be relieved of restrictions upon the sale of a house and land inherited by them at "Bonrepas," an old bailiwick of the Count of Chatillon near Vlist. It is revealed that Jan Vermeer, junior, who was a minor at his mother's death in 1688, disappeared from Delft and was not heard from for at least thirty years and that his son, also Jan Vermeer, in 1720 was living at Leyden, aged thirty-two. The names of another of the artist's sons and of five grandchildren appear in the documentation summarized as follows:

"27th of Feb. 1706

"The gentlemen of the court of the town of Delft, having seen and recorded the petition presented to them by Johann Kramer and all the children and grandchildren of the late Jan Vermeer and Catharina Bolnes requesting that some one be authorized and qualified to represent Jan Vermeer junior, aged 18 or 19, because of the absence of his father and to request from your honours, together with the other suppliants, relief from *fidicomis* of a certain dwelling, 9½ morgen (acres), situated in *bon repas*; and that after this relief has been obtained they may be permitted to sell the dwelling and the land, having authorized and qualified the said Johann Kramer just as the same is authorized and qualified herewith to represent the said Jan Vermeer, junior, in the absence of the latter's father, and

also in the name of the petitioners to request relief from *fidi-comis* of the said dwelling and lands and after that sell them and from the money so accruing to pay the debts of this estate. Passed on the 27 Feb 1706."

Further points concerning the history of the ownership of this property by members of the Vermeer family were discovered by the late Mr. P. A. Leupe, clerk in the archives office at The Hague, who made a search among the loan registers of the Reportorium. It was discovered that Catharina Bolnes (Vermeer's wife) on April 11, 1661, became the owner of "half a farm and land," as stated above. On May 2, 1689, Johannes van der Meer, living at Delft, upon the death of his mother and not being of age, took oath to such effect before a notary named Colevelt at The Hague. On June 25, 1720, the land was transferred to J. Vermeer, aged thirty-two and living at Leyden, since his father, absent in foreign parts and not heard from for about thirty years, was presumably dead. On June 19, 1721, the property was transferred to Aart Coorvaar, aged sixty years, living near Bon-repas,⁹ at the request of said Vermeer's children.

From the loan register Mr. Leupe also ascertained the names of several of the Vermeer heirs. On December 12, 1713, a paper was sworn to before a notary and witnesses at The Hague authorizing Otto van Hessel, silversmith, of The Hague to sell the farm formerly owned by Catharina Bolnes, but apparently no sale was effected. The document is interesting because it is signed as by children and grandchildren — heirs of Jan Vermeer and Catharina Bolnes, married and during their lives living at Delft, viz.: Ignatius Vermeer and Elisabeth Catharina Hisperius; grandchildren, Maria Vermeer, Aleydis Vermeer, Geertruy Vermeer, Johanna Vermeer, Catharina Vermeer.

⁹ Apparently Boerepas, near Schoonhoven; shown on a map of 1667 to be in the province of Utrecht, on the east side of the river Vlist near its junction with the river Lek, about twenty miles east of Delft and about sixteen miles southwest of Utrecht.

IV · *Vermeer, Forgotten and Rediscovered*

THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE that Jan Vermeer, master painter of Delft, was an important and conspicuous citizen. Arnold Bon, a Delft publisher of the day, wrote a poem on the death of the painter Carel Fabritius, killed in the Delft explosion of 1654, in which he spoke of Fabritius as a “ phoenix ” that appeared again in Vermeer:

“ Soo doov’ dan desen Phenix t’onser schade
In’t midden, en in’t beste van zyn swier,
Maar weer gelukkig rees’er uyt zyn vier
Vermeer, die meesterlyck betrad zyn pade.”

This may be freely translated as follows:

“ So departed this Phoenix to our sorrow in the midst and in the best of his career but luckily rose out of his work our Vermeer who in masterly fashion treads his path.”

Balthasar de Monconys, a French gentleman of means and a connoisseur, visiting Delft, entered Vermeer’s studio August 11, 1663, as he related in his “ *Journal des Voyages*,” which he published in 1676. He wrote: “ At Delphes I saw the painter Vermer (*sic*), who had no single one of his works — but we saw one at the home of a baker who had paid six hundred livres for it, although it had only one figure.” The same patron spoke of also visiting Gerard Dou, Frans van Mieris, Pieter van Slingelandt and others.

Dirk van Bleiswijk, secretary to the Delft magistrates, wrote a thousand-page book about the glories of Delft, entitled “ *Beschrijving der Stad Delft*,” published at Delft by Arnold Bon in 1667, and in it he mentioned Vermeer.

Still other evidence of Vermeer's popularity and high standing among his contemporaries conceivably exists; and it remains one of the surprising circumstances of the annals of the fine arts that during the eighteenth century and until his "rediscovery" in the middle of the nineteenth century, Vermeer was nearly forgotten.

It is strange, indeed, that a painter esteemed and honoured by his fellow citizens, who sold his pictures readily and who was visited by a travelling foreigner, was not long remembered by his fellow countrymen, but was in fact practically forgotten within fifty years after his death. One plausible explanation is that Arnold Houbraken, the gossiping Vasari of Holland, omitted Vermeer's name from his history of the Netherland painters ("De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlandsche Konstschilders," Amsterdam, 1719). He mentioned many daubers of the most mediocre talent, but for some obscure reason he ignored Vermeer, even though he seemingly should have known about the 1696 sale of the painter's works at Amsterdam and other Netherland sales of the early eighteenth century, some of which are known to have included works by Vermeer of Delft. By this oversight or intentional omission the Hall of Fame was for a long time closed to the master of Delft.

A possibility, however, that Houbraken really did mention Jan Vermeer of Delft, when he spoke of Vermeer of Utrecht, has been ingeniously set forth by Mr. Jean Decoen (*Burlington Magazine*, September, 1935). According to this hypothesis Vermeer was of both Utrecht and Delft. Mr. Decoen regards it as significant that "not a single picture of the so-called Vermeer of Utrecht is known to exist, and that, however far back we go, we find no mention of his name in the catalogues." Houbraken says of his "Johann van der Meer" of Utrecht: "He went to Rome in the company of Lievens Verchuuren.

He stayed there more than a year and perfected himself in his art. He painted pictures and life-size figures in the best style. At Rome he met Drost, Carel Lot . . . etc." It is Mr. Decoen's theory that as a young boy Vermeer learned the rudiments of his art in Italy, that on his return to the Netherlands he settled at first at Utrecht and then made his way to Delft where he worked from 1653 onward. It might be added to Mr. Decoen's exegesis of possibilities that the *Diana* of the Mauritshuis, now attributed to Vermeer of Delft, was formerly assigned to "Vermeer of Utrecht." Of it, writing in 1908, David C. Preyer says (in "The Art of the Netherland Galleries"): "A rare picture by Jan Vermeer van Utrecht represents *Diana at the Bath*, which, if we could leave out some Italian characteristics, might be called an early Vermeer van Delft."

Subsequent writers on art, after the manner of their kind, industriously copied Houbraken. The discursive Jakob Campo Weijerman, prolix to boredom concerning nonentities, in his four-volume "Lives of the Dutch Painters," is silent about Vermeer the Magical, as Mr. Lucas has aptly called him. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his notes of a journey to Flanders and Holland, writes of seeing "in the Cabinet of Mr. Le Brun a Woman pouring milk from one vessel to another" by D (*sic*) Vandermeere. He apparently was not profoundly impressed, for he went on to say that "the most considerable of the Dutch school are Rembrandt, Teniers, Jan Steen, Ostade, Brouwer, Gerard Dou, Mieris and Terborch. These excel in small conversations."

In the famous nine-volume "Catalogue Raisonné of the works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters," written and published by John Smith in London in 1833, twenty-five pages are devoted to the life and works of "Peter De Hooge." There follows one page, headed "Scholars and Imi-

tators of Peter De Hooqe," and containing three short paragraphs on "Samuel Van Hoogstracken (*sic*), Joust, or Justus, Van Geel and Vander Meer, of Delf." The author, as we have seen, says of the last-named: "This painter is so little known, by reason of the scarcity of his works, that it is quite inexplicable how he attained the excellence many of them exhibit. Much of the effect and style of De Hooqe is evident in all his pictures, but there are some few which approach that master so nearly, as to create a belief that he studied under him: these pictures generally represent the exterior views of houses. One of his best performances, representing the town of Delf, at sunset, is in the Musée at The Hague. This picture sold in a public sale, about ten years ago, for 5000 flo." Modern scholarship, as exemplified by Dr. W. R. Valentiner and Dr. de Groot, practically reverses the relative standing of de Hooch and Vermeer, and holds that it was the latter who influenced the former.

Years passed and for a century and a half Vermeer was all but forgotten. It is true that during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a few works by Vermeer had been well known and, as in the case of Sir Joshua's reference to the *Milk-woman*, had been properly attributed. Yet there had been confusion between Vermeer of Delft and the two van der Meers of Haarlem. Still other pictures, now accepted as by Vermeer, were attributed to other painters. Then came his rediscovery and recognition and when Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot in 1907 published the first volume of his monumental revision of that portion of Smith's "Catalogue" which deals with the Dutch painters, he devoted one hundred pages to 421 pictures by de Hooch and twenty-nine pages to 84 pictures which he accepted as by Vermeer or recorded as having been attributed to him. This clearly indicates the growth in the realization of Vermeer's importance during the nineteenth century. Kugler's





"Handbook of Painting," 1854, had not mentioned Jan Vermeer of Delft anywhere in its two volumes, though it gave four lines to "John van der Meer the Younger," of Haarlem. Twenty-five years later J. A. Crowe's revision of Kugler devoted more than two pages to Vermeer of Delft.

How did this great transformation of interest in Vermeer of Delft come about?

To the French writer, Théophile Thoré, who wrote usually under the signature of "W. Bürger," and who is throughout the chapters to follow generally styled M. Thoré, belongs the chief credit of having rescued from oblivion the name and fame of Jan Vermeer of Delft. His research, begun in Holland and continued there and elsewhere, took Vermeer out of the list of the little known Netherland painters and gave him recognition as one of the major artists of the world.

M. Thoré was a man of means who as a consequence of political activities in 1848 was exiled from France. His long expatriation gave him a motive for spending much time in a study of European collections of paintings. At the Hague museum he was impressed by the *View of Delft*, then as now attributed to Jan Vermeer. This seemed to him a very remarkable work, and he began to look for other paintings which might be by this mysterious artist whom he called "the Sphinx of Delft."

M. Thoré's attention was soon directed to the *Milkwoman* and the *Little Street in Delft*, pictures in the "cabinet," as Sir Joshua Reynolds would have called it, of Mynheer Six van Hillegom, in Amsterdam. The next two Vermeers to be discovered were the *Portrait of a Girl* in the Arenberg Collection and a certain *Cottage* in the cabinet of M. Suermondt, at Aix-la-Chapelle — the latter not now considered to be by Vermeer, though M. Thoré thought it "delicious."

Having the collaboration of several gentlemen of artistic tastes, among them Sir Charles Eastlake, President of the Royal Academy of Great Britain, and with scanty information from the Netherland archives to supplement his own acumen, M. Thoré was able to discover, or rediscover, a considerable number of "Vermeers." His enthusiasm, indeed, led him to attribute to his Delft Sphinx as many as seventy-two paintings, whereas a later and cooler criticism has accepted even today considerably fewer than fifty of these. The errors in attribution, incidentally, which M. Thoré made were chiefly in respect of landscapes, and it is still difficult to say positively that a landscape of Delft or its environs is not by Vermeer, since his mode of composition and colour in landscape arrangements is less strikingly characteristic than is that of his interiors with figures.

While M. Thoré devoted several years to a fascinating hunt for paintings by Vermeer, he also tried to discover in the Delft archives details of his painter's life. The resident librarian announced that he could find there nothing of any pertinence, and the amiable critic took him at his word. In the eighteen-seventies, however, M. Henry Havard and his collaborator, M. Obreen, succeeded in making personal search among the archives, which happen to be well kept and clear, and they were able to copy notations. In the civic archives at Delft, the *Burgerlijke Stand*, the investigators found about 175,000 entries between the years 1575 and 1808.

In 1858 M. Thoré brought out his book on the museums of Holland in which he listed twelve Vermeers. He continued to explore other galleries, as at Brussels, Vienna, Berlin, Dresden, Cologne, Brunswick. He bought several Vermeer paintings, and he persuaded his friends to buy others. A treasure of his collection was the *Young Lady with the Pearl Necklace*, later acquired by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin. He owned the

Young Lady at the Virginals, of the National Gallery, London; the *Young Lady at a Spinet*, now in the same gallery, and the admirable Vermeer of Fenway Court, Boston. Among the paintings which he acquired was *An Old Woman with a Reel*. This had been offered to the National Gallery for £157. 10 s., but was not bought. Learning of the existence of this work M. Thoré purchased it but resold it to an English art dealer and it has not since reappeared.

The *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, in 1866 published three long, illustrated articles on Vermeer by M. Thoré. This publication really initiated the present-day vogue of Vermeer of Delft. Since then, as Rinder wrote in his sketch of Vermeer, *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, "his repute has steadily increased till now he is accorded a prominent, perhaps a foremost, place among the Little Masters of Holland. For long there has been no need, as was once the practice, to substitute for his name that of Pieter de Hooch in order to effect a sale at a high price." That Vermeer, by reason of his human appeal, the peculiar loveliness of his colours and his portrayal of light no less than his technical merits, is entitled to rank as a Great, not a Little, Master of Art is a thesis of the present volume which perhaps can be sustained as his paintings are studied critically.

V · *His Genius and His Methods*

VERMEER WAS UNDOUBTEDLY taught to paint by the method under which practically all young painters of Holland between, say, 1620 and 1700, learned their *metier*. The student then drew much from "the flat" — usually from a drawing or an engraving. Such copying is out of fashion nowadays, but much can be said in its favour, especially if the designs to be copied are well chosen. The student learns to work for correct proportions and a simple way of suggesting the appearance of things before he is confronted by the overpowering complexity of nature.

Use of casts was common in the painters' workshops. It is recorded that among many other casts kept for instruction of his students, Rembrandt had in his studio twenty or more hands, cast from nature. The young artist was often required to "draw limbs in plaster the size of life and also larger." There is a painting by Metsu which represents a lady in the act of drawing from a cast.

The *écorché*, or anatomy figure with exposed muscles, was carefully studied — as indeed it should be more frequently in the art schools of today. Anatomy from the cadaver was perhaps pursued with some difficulty in those days, though it is recorded that Aart Mytens, an artist of sorts, cut down a gallows bird and carried him home in a sack, to dissect him. Perspective was studied with enthusiasm, chiefly from Albrecht Dürer's treatise, though compendiums had been written by other and later men.

There exist two informing pictures by Michael Sweerts in one of which students are drawing from the cast, in the other working from the life. The latter, except for the antique costumes and surroundings, looks very much like a modern life class. While the Hollanders seldom displayed the nude in art, they appreciated the value of studying it as part of the draughtsman's training. Sweerts's picture of work in a Dutch life room differs from the aspect of an art school of today chiefly as regards the age of the students. These he depicted as boys of fifteen or sixteen years. Artists of old began their careers early, and their apprenticeship followed a definite form, presumably an inheritance from regulations common to the mediaeval guilds. The apprentice was bound to a master for at least two years, his parents or guardians paying a stated sum for instruction. It is known that Rembrandt, Gerard Dou, and Honthorst had each 100 florins a year for a pupil. Ferdinand van Apshoven, a lesser man, received less than fifty florins. The painter in return supplied the student with food and lodging as well as instruction. In Rembrandt's house each student had his own room. Students of other masters may not have been so fortunate. An amusing detail in contracts for apprenticeship was that the student's father often obligated himself to bring to the master a yearly present of a barrel of herring.

The student made copies, as required, from the master's work, and often painted accessories in his pictures. It is known that in Michael Miereveld's studio at Delft the students executed many copies of his works which he signed as by himself, this practice evidently not then being considered dishonourable. In some studios the student was allowed to paint one picture a year which he might sign with his own name.

The instruction in painting included as a requirement that the apprentice should learn to grind his colours, clean and set

palettes, and stretch canvases. Stress was laid upon familiarity with these mechanical details of the craft. In 1643 a fine arts dealer, Volmarijn by name, opened in Leyden a shop for the sale of "prepared and unprepared colours, panels, canvas and painting utensils of all kinds." Despite the establishment of such shops, however, the Netherland painters for the most part continued to grind their own colours down into the nineteenth century. The stone table for mixing pigments was an accessory of the studios, and the inventory of Vermeer's effects shows that he had such a table.

After he had learned properly to prepare his materials, the student was permitted to copy a picture, usually one by the master himself. Such practice tended to make the apprentice paint very much as did the head of the shop; and if he could do this he was considered a good student. In all studios, the student learned to work neatly, for great case was made of a spotlessly clean palette and of not letting work get dusty, the artist usually hanging a cloth over a painting when not at work on it. Instead of the *godets* or oil cups now used, the painter kept a cup or bowl of his "medium" close at hand, dipping into it as he saw fit. His easel was more primitive than one of present manufacture. The upright easel, indeed, appears not to have been devised. On an easel of three legs the paintings were tilted at an angle. The brushes, palette, knife and mahlstick followed very much the style of today.

Artists then as now collected attractive materials which could be used as studio accessories. In the inventory of Vermeer's effects, as already noted, mention is made of seven ells of gold leather hanging, a landscape, a sea piece and a large picture of the Crucifixion. These possessions are identified in one or another of his works.

It is hardly necessary to say, as Dr. W. Martin, of the Mau-

ritshuis at The Hague, points out in his "Life of a Dutch Artist," that then as now a painter could send his paintings to dealers "on commission." It is known, for instance, that either Vermeer or his widow sent twenty-six pictures to the artist and art dealer Coelenbier at Haarlem, presumably for sale; and that the painter Palamedes, who was closely associated with Vermeer in the board of government of the Guild, sent his pictures to dealers at Haarlem, Leyden, Rotterdam, and so on. The prices of paintings were not generally very high. For his *Night Watch*, for instance, Rembrandt received only 1600 *gulden*.

Working in such an environment, Vermeer developed a technique which is to some extent a revelation of his personality, even though little is known of actual incidents of his life. It may still be somewhat disputed who his master was or from whom, if from any one, he learned his own special methods of work.

Reasons for his belief that Carel Fabritius could have been, and probably was, Jan Vermeer's master are set forth in a closely documented article on "Carel and Barent Fabritius" by Dr. W. R. Valentiner in *The Art Bulletin* of the College Art Association, September, 1932. Much information that concerns these painter brothers has been amassed through the researches of H. F. Wijnman, published in *Oud-Holland*, 1931, and other investigators; and some of the data thus established may have a bearing upon Vermeer's apprenticeship.

It had been assumed that Carel Fabritius was too young to have been Vermeer's master. Research, however, has placed his birth as of "about the 25th of February, 1622." He was thus Vermeer's senior by about ten years. He had been in Rembrandt's studio where, it is interesting to note, he had as his fellow student Samuel van Hoogstraten who mentions Carel

Fabritius as a student with him in his "Inleyding tot de hooge school der Schilderconst," printed at Rotterdam in 1678. Paintings by van Hoogstraten were recorded as among Vermeer's effects.

Born Carel Pietersz, and taking the name of Fabritius because he at first followed the craft of carpentry, Carel Fabritius came to Delft in 1650. The surname Fabritius had in the meantime come to be applied to the painter's whole family. In 1652 he painted *The Dealer in Musical Instruments*, now in the National Gallery, London, in the middle distance of which is recognized the Nieuwe Kerk of Delft. Evidently in debt he did not join the Guild of St. Luke until October 29, 1652, paying at first only half of the entrance fee of twelve *gulden*, for a "foreigner," i.e., one not a Delft citizen. The record of his admission, with both his names spelled unusually, is as follows: "Schilder Kaerel Frabicijus heeft hem als meester Schilder doen aentekenen opden 29 October 1652 ende alsoo hij vreempt is moet betalen twaelf gulden ende heeft betaelt ses gulden, rest 6 gul." It is known that he took pupils, for Matthias Spors, called his pupil, lost his life with his master in the powder magazine explosion of 1654.

If Vermeer also was a pupil of Carel Fabritius his period of study with him was brief, as Dr. Valentiner indicates in the following passage:

"There has been a controversy over whether this poetical outburst [Arnold Bon's elegy] is to be actually understood as implying that Vermeer had been Fabritius's pupil. It is probable that it is, for shortly after Carel's death, when the poem was written, the fame of the young Vermeer was hardly so secured that from among other Delft artists he alone should have come into question as having the right to the title of the young phoenix who would rise from the ashes, had not the school

relation to Fabritius been the occasion of the poet's effort. Besides this, the fact that among the few pictures which Vermeer possessed at his death, there were three works by Carel Fabritius, is evidence of the close relation of the two artists. The stylistic comparison of the early works of Vermeer with Fabri-



DECORATED BLUE AND WHITE PLATE, DEPICTING
THE GREAT DELFT EXPLOSION OF 1654

tius's paintings by no means contradicts this. As Vermeer became a free master on December 29, 1653, he can only have been a pupil of Fabritius in the interval between this date and October of the preceding year, when Fabritius became a member of the Lucas Guild."

It seems doubtful if Vermeer was ever considerably influenced by this pupil of Rembrandt. Fabritius's technique is scrappy and casual, while Vermeer's is, in all his works, thoughtful and well considered. As regards composition, Vermeer could have learned things from his contemporary, for Fabritius's ar-

rangements are quite original. His *Goldfinch*, (Plate 52) in the Royal Gallery of Paintings, in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, is an example of this originality. His mode of composing, furthermore, was developed from that of his master, Rembrandt, and hence of certain Italian masters, while a composition by Vermeer is reminiscent of no one else, unless possibly it be of the Japanese. The argument from internal evidence disproves the theory of Fabritius's having been in any really dominating sense Vermeer's master. In the case of a painter as original as Velázquez it still is easy to trace the marked influence, first of Herrera, then of Pacheco, and later of El Greco. But no such obvious derivations can be observed in Vermeer's work. He and Fabritius were both of Delft. They must have known each other. Yet, about all that one can say of them and their probable relationship is that both were extremely original men, but in very different ways.

Since museum catalogues and other compilations call Fabritius Vermeer's master, it is informing to quote Mr. R. H. Wilenski on this point: "He (Carel Fabritius) had a natural conception of the classical defined picture-space which was overruled for a time by his association with Rembrandt and reasserted itself in his later years; and this classical cast of Carel's mind is of special significance since Vermeer, who was destined to become a supreme classical master, was doubtless his pupil at some time. He had, moreover, an urge towards bold experiments in classical-architectural composition, and it is, I fancy, not without significance that he concerned himself with optics and may have experimented in the use of mirrors in composing or painting his most original works." This topic of the likelihood that Vermeer and several of his contemporaries used mirrors in the studio is interestingly discussed by Mr. Wilenski in his "Introduction to Dutch Art," pages 280-290, to whose

conjectures concerning the manner of painting the *Studio* and other pictures the reader may be referred.

It has been suggested that a short period of study with Fabritius may have followed an apprenticeship with another master,



DECORATED BLUE AND WHITE PLATE, DEPICTING
THE HAGUE GATE AT DELFT, AT THE NORTHERN
EDGE OF THE CITY

conceivably Leonard Bramer, from whom Vermeer could have learned the technical processes of the painter's art.

This is not altogether improbable. Leonard (or Leonaert) Bramer (1614–c. 1667), painter, of Delft, has been conjectured to have been a brother of Pieter Bramer (or Brammer) whose name appears in Jan Vermeer's baptismal record. This, so far as known, is only a supposition. The Bramers named could have been cousins, or uncle and nephew, or quite unrelated. Bramer, nevertheless, was an uncommon name in Delft records, and it happens that Leonard Bramer's technique and idiosyn-

crasies were of a sort to have fitted him to be what he possibly was — a master of Vermeer. He had travelled much in Italy, and while there he had become acquainted with Adam Elsheimer, by whom he was influenced. On returning to Holland he became one of Rembrandt's friends, but even before such friendship began he was known as a passionate searcher into the laws of light and shade — of *chiaroscuro*, as the writers of an older day liked to call it. Bramer was not an artist of the first rank, but his paintings, bathed in light and air, held figures of a real distinction. He surely would have been competent to teach a promising student the elements of his art, and particularly of the *chiaroscuro* which became so vital an element in Vermeer's painting. It is interesting that Bramer was a member of the board of the Guild of St. Luke in 1654, the year following Vermeer's admission; that he was its chairman in 1655; a member again in 1661 and 1663; and chairman again in 1665. He was a member of the Guild beginning April 30, 1629, when he was admitted as a master painter, paying in full the Delft citizen's fee of six florins.

VI · Characteristics of Vermeer's Technique

VERMEER'S VERY GREAT QUALITIES were precisely those which cannot have been taught him by an instructor. He must have developed them by and for himself. He had, of course, been grounded in some studio in the precise methods of the day. His knowledge of light and shade should have been derived from some one's teaching. His works were laid in strongly and solidly, as others laid theirs in. Yet throughout his career Jan Vermeer evinced a sensitiveness to *chiaroscuro* far more acute than that possessed by any other artist of the Netherlands. His intuition regarding colour was quite his own. No other painter of his time had such appreciation of the beauty of cool tones. He erred, indeed, if it ever was an error, in the direction of a coolness sometimes overbalancing his warmer tones; whereas the other Lowlanders generally made the mistake of making their work too hot — of emphasizing red, yellow, and brown tones at the expense of the blues, greens, and cool grays.

While creating for himself an original technique, Vermeer, naturally, varied his manner of painting as he grew older and became more and more skilful in building a subtle colour tonality over a monochrome underpainting. The *Courtesan* or *Procuress*, apparently the earliest of his known works, is painted with a rather heavy hand; it seems to have been made directly, and it may even have been started *de premier coup*, that is, without preliminary underpainting; so, too, of others of Vermeer's earlier works which are heavily, and perhaps directly, painted. His later ones, on the contrary, were worked up on canvases

that had been underpainted with blue or green, a practice accounting for the bluish or greenish tonality which some of them today reveal. The ground, indeed, can sometimes be seen through the canvas, as notably in the *Lady at the Virginals*, National Gallery, and the *Woman at the Casement*, Metropolitan Museum. In the former of these the tonality is distinctly greenish, and the writer well remembers the shock he experienced on first seeing it. In the painting at the Metropolitan the general tone is bluish, and, while one is aware that Vermeer loved blue and that this picture was conceived as from a blue keynote, it still appears that a blue ground does, in some measure, show through.

Paintings of the Netherland masters, it may be added, have quite generally suffered at the cleaner's hands. It was a usual method, as in Vermeer's later practice, to start a picture quite solidly, using opaque colours and leaving the edges fairly sharp. Then glazes and scumbles, principally the former, were employed to modify the edges. The present-day mode of cleaning a painting with tampons of cotton soaked with a cleaning mixture is safe enough for a canvas which was painted directly, without glazes. In the case of older pictures, with their delicate glazes, the story is different. One has seen a fine Metsu ruined by a so-called expert cleaner. Several of Vermeer's works have undoubtedly been injured by stupid cleaning.

Study of his brushwork is essential to an understanding of Vermeer's technique, and to correct attribution of paintings ascribed to him. He painted with something very like the "square touch" that has been much in vogue among twentieth century painters. This workmanship is particularly noticeable in the *Lace Maker*, Louvre, and the *Woman at the Casement*, Metropolitan; but traces of it are observable in other paintings. The ribbons, for example, of the *Portrait of a Woman*, Buda-

Pesth, are done in this manner so unmistakably that one wonders how any ordinarily observant person ever thought of attributing this work to Rembrandt. The latter painted with a round brush. Franz Hals, as is well known, used the square touch, though principally to give *brio* to his lights — actually to impart an exaggerated force to the high light. Vermeer, in contradistinction, employed this touch for the careful, studied placing of one flat plane beside another, and for a subsequent brushing of the edges together. Such brushwork is considerably responsible, indeed, for giving Vermeer his modern look — for this method of applying the pigment is not like that of most of the older Netherland painters.

Vermeer had, however, another touch for occasional use. He seems to have employed a small round brush to apply a succession of staccato touches where he felt the need of brilliancy or a suggestion of richness of effect. This manipulation sometimes appears on the same canvas with the square touch, and sometimes not. It was more frequently used on the earlier pictures, though it may be observed in his latest known work, the *Studio*, most of which is made with the suave square touch, but the painter found it necessary to make the pattern in the curtain more brilliant or more vibrant by resorting to what some writers have called his *pointillé* manner.¹

One of Vermeer's qualities which evokes the admiration of many professional painters is the justness of his study of edges.

When a painter speaks of an "edge" he means the separation of one form or mass from another. Where, for instance, a head comes against a background, it is bounded by an edge. Such

¹ It should be noted that this term, though frequently applied to Vermeer's manner of using a small round brush, is misleading if one conceives of *pointillism* in the sense in which it describes the work of Seurat and other French impressionists. These made their paintings almost exclusively from tiny specks of pure colour, juxtaposed. Vermeer did not anticipate impressionism — as regards either Manet's theory of values or Seurat's method.

edges vary in character according to conditions of light, their distance from the spectator, and their own intrinsic sharpness or softness.

The problems of rendering edges are fundamental in the art of pictorial representation. Primitive painters almost universally made, as amateurs still make, their edges too uniformly sharp. Their work, as a consequence, whatever its merit may be, looks hard. Leonardo da Vinci was perhaps the first painter to study edges systematically, making the separation of his masses distinct where it appeared sharp; soft, where in nature it looked blurry and indeterminate. Many of da Vinci's followers, and still more the school of Correggio, tended to paint their edges almost uniformly soft; and this to some extent was a defect of Rembrandt.

Most Netherland painters studied their edges attentively, and so it happens that one thinks less of the hardness or softness of their work than is the case in viewing old masters of other nations. Almost any one of their good paintings simply looks about right in this respect. Among them all, however, Vermeer was most notably successful in creating something so like the aspect of nature that the spectator takes the edges for granted.

Literary critics of the art of painting may suppose this question of edges, of rendering the effect of "lost and found" in representative art, to be a quite trivial matter, and unworthy of the importance which painters assign to it. It was, nevertheless, his sensitive and intelligent study of edges that gave Vermeer his mastery of light and shade. His interiors have a charm from seeming to be defined clearly in pellucid air. Objects delineated in them do not look cloudy or as if seen through a thick haze. The unmannered edge was one of Vermeer's supreme technical achievements. Less than any other painter of Holland did he resort to a mechanical subterfuge to create atmosphere or

aerial perspective, as by unduly softening the edges of things far back in the picture or out of the focus. Everything in one of his paintings was put into place, into right relationship with everything else, by well-considered study of all the edges. The end of a map stick against a wall appears with just the clearness it had in actuality; yet — the painter has somehow given an impression of its being further back than are the principal parts of the composition. He managed to express the “specific values,” so to say, of different edges. He knew how to make things “go back,” while retaining a sense of their form and solidity. The technical problem involved in this study of edges is excessively difficult. Vermeer, unlike Rembrandt and others who softened their edges indiscriminately, faced all the difficulties of hard and soft, of “lost and found,” manfully, and overcame them.

Vermeer's conscientiousness in observing separations was continued in his registration of light and shade. He noted in a remarkable way the comparative obscurity of the shadows in their relationship with the light. He did not paint them hazy and obscure, but gave each shadow its own luminosity and colour. This seems simple enough, but it is a difficult feat of good painting, for pitfalls into which the greatest masters of *chiaroscuro* have fallen can be seen at museums. Ribera and Caravaggio consistently made their shadows unpleasantly obscure and black. Rembrandt, who perceived how shadows are illuminated by reflected light within them, made them, usually, somewhat too warm; possibly, too, he sometimes rendered his reflected lights too prominently — a fault for which young students of painting are scolded. Velázquez was addicted to shadows too uniformly brown, except in one or two wonderful paintings such as *Las Meninas*.

It is not in humanity to be perfect, but it can be said that

Vermeer recorded his perception of light and shade more sensitively than did any other European painter. His colour as seen today may not always look absolutely right, but its infelicities can be laid to pigment changes or over-cleaning. In those of his paintings which have "kept," the colour of the shadows is both beautiful and true. No one has ever painted the graduated light on a wall better than he. Some of the moderns have perhaps noted "colour shifts" a little more acutely, but any one of them would acknowledge that Vermeer was the master who first showed them the way.

The jewel-like finish of a painting by Vermeer has sometimes been criticised as if it were a defect.² Yet, as regards *facture*, observe that Vermeer, like most of the other Netherland painters (except Rembrandt and some of his pupils), painted smoothly. Even Rembrandt, indeed, in his little interiors, such as the *Philosopher* at the Louvre, worked towards a smooth surface, doubtless because there was no other way of rendering fine details. Vermeer's earliest known painting, the *Courtesan*, as a matter of fact, was painted rather heavily — this, perhaps, due to the frequent repaintings of a youth not yet sure of his effects. As, however, he grew more skilful, his pictures became smoother in surface, some of the later ones extremely so. This high finish presumably did not arise from artistic timidity or from a liking for slick things. Though Vermeer kept his surfaces smooth, he contrived always to have them interesting and agreeable in quality — *bien nourri*, as the French say. Some painters — great artists at that, like Ingres — in making a surface sleek, have given it a mean and impoverished

² Thus Mr. Thomas Craven, in his "Men of Art": "He (Vermeer) resembles a diamond cutter in his manner of working and in his finished product, adding globule to globule to fashion a jeweled object, just as the lapidary, with infinite skill and phlegmatic diligence, adds facet to facet to bring out the splendour of an expensive substance. Try as you may to find anything spiritual in him and you will find yourself talking of craftsmanship and describing precious stones."



Plate 7

Vermeer recorded his perception of light and shade more sensitively than did any other European painter. The colour as seen today may not always look absolutely pure, but its infelicities can be laid to pigment change or over-painting. In those of his paintings which have "faded" the colour of the shadows is both beautiful and true. For one has never painted the protracted light in a wall better than in *Some of the Dutch Masters* perhaps noted "colour shone" a little more clearly. And one of them would acknowledge that Vermeer has the colour which first showed them the way.

The jewel-like finish of a painting by Vermeer has sometimes been criticised as if it were a defect.* Yet, as regards *facture*, observe that Vermeer, like most of the other Netherland painters (except Rembrandt and some of his pupils), painted smoothly. *Jan Vermeer of Delft*

THE LOVE LETTER

RIJKS MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

worked towards a smooth surface. In his early work he was not so careful of rendering fine details. Vermeer's earliest known painting, the *Courtesan*, as a matter of fact, was painted rather roughly — this, perhaps, due to the frequent repainting of a youth not yet sure of his effects. As, however, he grew more skilful, his pictures became smoother in surface, some of the later ones extremely so. This high finish presumably did not arise from artistic timidity or from a longing for slick things. Though Vermeer kept his technique smooth, he contrived always to have them interesting and appealing in quality — *bien noueux*, in the French say. Some paintings — great artists at that, like *Landscape* — in making a surface slick, have given it a mean and repulsive feel.

* Thus Mr. Thomas Cooper in his *Study of Art*: "His (Vermeer's) modelling is cold and cutter in his manner. It is cold and so his manner is cold, adding glaze to glaze to fashion a smooth surface, just as one would with infinite skill and ylematic diligence add coat to coat to bring out the splendour of a precious substance. Try to paint as he has everything painted in blue and you will find yourself rising in indignation and describing pictures worse."



look. In Vermeer's workmanship one has always the sense of a well-charged brush. His draperies are rendered fluently, though without overloading of the pigment. Even his staccato touches come from a sufficiently full brush. One would say that he did not use much medium or vehicle in attaining his fused effects, but that he depended upon a quantity, or ration, of pigments daily ground for him by his colour boy.

These freshly mixed tones — doubtless containing much oil, but oil carefully mixed in and not scrabbled in after the haphazard chance of the palette — enabled Vermeer to work over and over his passages, with freedom and yet smoothly. Nor was this quality of the surface a fetich. If Vermeer felt that he had made the edge of a shadow too sharp, instead of fuzzing the edges together or wiping one into another, as Metsu was wont to do, he worked with his staccato touches, after a fashion of stippling, until the desired vagueness was attained. This process necessitated his making each touch of just the right colour, and in less skilful hands the paint would have lumped up.

Vermeer must have started his picture by laying in the light and shade very flat, without, at first, much suggestion of modeling. In almost any of his paintings in which a part has been left comparatively unfinished, one is conscious of the simple flatness of this. The modeling of the figures and important accessories which followed the primary laying-in is, of course, excellent, as has been the modeling of all great painters. It was so elusive, in Vermeer's case, that with difficulty one perceives or describes its peculiarities. No one can conjecture just how the thing was done. The result is simply there, without telltale evidence of tricks or brushwork. It was part of the artist's art to conceal the manner of its making.

Modern executants who stress the importance of planes and planal angles cannot cite Vermeer as one who felt form as they

feel it. He seems always to have thought more, in a general way, of causing objects to look round than to render the individual planes with sharp differentiation. The *Head of a Young Girl*, The Hague, is perhaps the finest piece of modeling we have from Vermeer's hand. In it the turn from the shadow of the cheek into the light, the modulations of the mouth, the gradations of the half light on the nose, are really marvelous. Its sense of light and shade, indeed, makes this one of the finest heads ever painted. Yet it was modeled, apparently, by one whose primary interest was in its rotundity; the feeling in it of the relationship of the planes is not very strong. In some of Vermeer's earlier paintings, as in the *Milkwoman*, the modeling is more marked, is less subtle than in his later works, while in the *Lace Maker* the observance of the planes is quite evident.

When painting, Vermeer undoubtedly sat at his easel instead of standing before it, as most present-day painters do. Sitting at the easel seems to have been the general custom of the Netherland painters. A minor matter, this, of standing or sitting before one's work; yet it has a bearing upon technical accomplishments. The best in modern painting is likely to be strong in respect of its values. The large notes are seen and recorded convincingly, but the lesser transitions are often slighted; objects are rendered vigorously but sometimes abruptly and petulantly. In the older painting, of the Low Countries especially, and transcendently in Vermeer, the values are well enough seen; but the diverse elements are brought into unity by an effort of intelligence rather than by a mere dabbing-on of notes that are approximately right in relation to each other. The transitions and modulations are exquisitely studied by a man who, well planted in his seat, possessed his soul in quietude instead of eagerly walking forward and back in his studio. The rendering, in brief, is suave and serene.

A question, similar to the one just considered, which greatly interests painters, is whether Vermeer painted *de premier coup* or on an *ébauche*; that is, whether he began his painting, touch by touch, piece by piece, or whether he made a general rub-in, as most painters do now.

A reason for thinking that in at least some of his pictures Vermeer painted *de premier coup* is that in the *Studio* the artist, who has drawn in his subject in white chalk, is beginning to paint the wreath on the girl's head without having rubbed in the rest of the composition at all. It is not necessary to suppose that the artist was Vermeer himself, but if he posed a model or a friend he would probably represent this person as painting in the way he, himself, was accustomed to paint. An alternative is to conceive this as an ironical comment on another man's way of painting, but Vermeer's style, generally, was so detached, so devoid of anecdote or comment, that such a supposition is rather absurd.

While the piece-by-piece method is thought by many painters to be a futile and silly way of beginning a picture, there is something to be said in its favour, when it is competently followed. A "rub-in" is not necessarily true in its general effect. It is true only in so far forth as its maker is perceptive and skilful enough to make it true. If the unknown artist of the Vermeer picture who is painting a wreath were clever enough to pitch his darkest accent and his highest light essentially right, his work would turn out truer in values than a picture made by a "rubber-in" who should not, at the outset, have got his darkest accent and his highest light just right. A disadvantage, in other words, of the rub-in, is that from its very rapidity one is likely to get everything more or less wrong. The painter assumes that his general effect is right, and, proceeding on such a supposition, produces something that is too dingy, too dark, or too

brown, or whatever the general defect of his rub-in may have been. It is quite possible, on the contrary, for a painter to think out in advance his relations of tones and colours while he starts in to make his picture piece by piece, and it may well be that Vermeer proceeded in this way. He would decide how dark to set his lowest notes, as in his black picture frames; and how light he could have his highest notes, which would still appear coloured. Having thus determined their "pitch" he gradually registered the intermediate notes, one by one, as related in a scale of correspondences to the lights and darks of nature.

Things that are carried far are usually begun piece by piece. The mere fact that the painter does not lay in a general effect makes him solicitous about the final effect towards which he is working. Vermeer's paintings look as if they had been so made.

A quality which is sometimes called "architectonic" gives Vermeer's works not a little of their charm. Whatever of incident or action may be happening within the composition, one feels behind it firm, upright lines: column or pilaster, quiet horizontal lines of beam or baseboard. The paintings have a "built" look which gives them a sense of steadiness and peace. One proof of the artistic value of this quality is that the lack of it is felt in the few pieces attributed to Vermeer which are not so composed, as in the *Courtesan* and the *Diana*.

Whether Vermeer was conscious of a psychic appeal of the balance of grave vertical and horizontal lines is doubtful; very likely he was not. The effect, at all events, is there, and while it is one which other artists have striven for — de Hooch, his friend, Albert Moore, Whistler, and so on — one associates this primarily with Vermeer; without doubt because he attained it more successfully than any other.

A cognate quality which Vermeer shares with few painters is his severity of line. He was not a man who strove for telling

outline; sometimes, as in the detail of a hand, his line perceptibly falters. He understood, nevertheless, the sensation of strength that a straight or nearly straight line may give in support of, or in opposition to, a curved line. In some pictures, as notably in the *Pearl Necklace*, Berlin, he carries this simplifying of contour almost to excess. One may, indeed, be justified in putting the maker of the Elgin marbles, Millet and Vermeer in a class by themselves as regards almost perfect mastery of the simplified line.

This appreciation of the value of severe and distinguished line, interestingly, does not appear in Vermeer's earlier work. It is not found in the *Courtesan*, and certainly not in the *Toilette of Diana* which, truth to say, is in point of design rather a tiresome performance. The *Milkwoman* lacks line. The *Pearl Necklace*, on the other hand, the *Metropolitan Woman at a Casement*, the *Music Lesson* — long at Windsor Castle, now at Buckingham Palace — the *Lady at the Virginals*, National Gallery, reveal a fine understanding of the potentialities of severe line.

In several of Vermeer's best painted works, curiously enough, the sense of line is not so obvious and impressive as in the pictures just mentioned. In the *Studio*, Czernin Collection, and the *Love Letter*, Rijks Museum, which seem to have been painted at about the same time, the scheme of composing by use of verticals and horizontals has been followed, but with hardly so beautiful an outcome. Vermeer, possibly, at last became so much interested in painting for its own delightful sake that he ceased to pay much attention to the graces of composition or design.

Evaluation of Vermeer's drawing is difficult because while, in one sense of the word, he was an excellent draughtsman, there is another viewpoint from which his drawing was not remark-

able. He did not draw structurally at all. While many of the Netherland painters knew their anatomy and constructed their figures understandingly, it is questionable if Vermeer really understood the construction of the arm, the wrist, the hand, the knee, the foot. By sheer keenness of perception he sometimes rendered wonderfully well the general shape and size of a hand; this by indication of the way the light slid over it. He often drew heads well, as if they were still life. His accessories were delineated about as adequately as by anyone. There is occasionally a little faltering in getting one side of a jug even with the other side, but, practically speaking, Vermeer, working always from the appearance of things, delineated still life — chairs, crumpled rugs and his famous lion's heads — quite adequately.

In respect both of the excellences and the limitations of his draughtsmanship Vermeer was decidedly a painter of old Holland. It is fashionable to speak of Rembrandt and his contemporaries as impeccable draughtsmen; Fromentin and Kenyon Cox, the latter an accomplished draughtsman himself, have written to that effect. Yet, as must appear to anyone looking sympathetically through portfolios of old drawings, a wild scribble by Cellini, or by almost any one of the baroque imitators of Michelangelo, contains more adequate suggestion of construction than can be noted in any Netherland work. This is not to say that the baroque scribbles are altogether good; one indicates merely that their makers knew something of anatomical structure, of attachments and flexions of muscles. They got at the drawing of an arm or of a torso from intimate perception of its construction, whereas the men of Holland sought to render it as it looked by studying its proportions and the effect of light and shade upon it. The latter got what they were after, generally, but their drawing was not necessarily constructive.

While Vermeer depicted most still life admirably his treatment of draperies was not invariably successful. Sometimes, indeed, as in the *New Testament*, it was extremely bad. This defect did not matter so much in portrayal of the stiffly quaint costumes of the time, but in the management of a classical subject the unskilful rendering of the draperies is unedifying.

This weakness is notable in the *Diana*, the drapery of which chaste huntress is badly cluttered up. The directness of vision which served Vermeer so well in recording a jug or a rug sometimes failed him as he attacked the difficult problem of complex draperies. He did not then paint across the form, as in many of his beautiful heads and bits of still life, but with the form, after the more meretricious manner of lesser men.

Because some of his draperies are brilliantly and very competently painted, as superlatively in the skirt of the *Brunswick Coquette*, it has been plausibly supposed that Vermeer, when he could do so, arranged his costumes on a lay figure. He thus could do his draperies like a crumpled rug or a hanging curtain magnificently because they stayed still for him; he rendered what he saw.

This topic of the handling of draperies is vital towards an understanding of the qualities and defects of Jan Vermeer's art. To make handsome classic drapery requires, as is well known in the studios, prolonged and special study and a particular comprehension of the nature and manner of folds. Such power of analysis of a difficult problem of depiction Vermeer simply did not have. Neither did most of his contemporaries. He had a wonderful hand and a wonderful eye. Anything that would remain still for him — that he could look at again and again, studying every phase of its appearance, — that thing he was able to depict as no other man could.

Gesture is a quality which, in some artists' work, is supremely

important. Studying some reproductions of a group of Ingres's paintings and drawings you realize that much, if not most, of the extraordinary distinction of his work springs from the original and well-chosen action of his figures. As for Vermeer, however, it must be said that with him gesture is of secondary consequence. His is usually competent — it is seldom grotesque, as often with Rembrandt; yet, for a man as original in arrangement and colour as Vermeer was, it is remarkable that he was so little interested in unusual and distinguished gesture.

The action of any one of his good figures, as in the *Lace Maker*, Louvre, is seen to be correct. It explains itself, but one feels nothing especially significant in it. It is not piquant. It does not appeal to the imagination as does the gesture of one of Edgar Degas's ballet girls or washerwomen to whose every movement has been imparted a significance, an intention, that somehow transcends the mere necessity of the bodily movement.

The most beautiful gesture, perhaps, which Vermeer achieved was in the *Pearl Necklace*, Berlin Gallery. Here one does sense something of indescribable significance in the pose — the universality of the eternal feminine. And the *Pearl Necklace*, doubtless because so charmingly gestured, is among the most popular of his works.

No other of the old masters responded to the subtleties of light and shade, to adequate registration of both "dark and light values" and "colour values," as did Jan Vermeer. This was a quality making his work unique in his time; it explains in considerable part the enthusiasm with which painters influenced by the French impressionism of the late nineteenth century have acclaimed Vermeer.

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The most beautiful gesture, perhaps, which Vermeer achieved was in the *Girl with a Pearl Necklace*, Berlin Gallery. Here one does sense something of indubitable significance in gesture — the universality of the eternal feminine. And the *Girl with a Pearl Necklace*, doubtless because so charmingly gestured, is among the most popular of his works.

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highest light to lowest dark; or, in case of colour values, from hottest to coldest hue.

It is a customary practice of the studios and art classes to emphasize a certain simplification of nature by starting a sketch or picture with a quick indication of the "big values." A landscape painter, to whom values are essential if he is to avoid getting all mixed up as he paints, will habitually rub in a very light sky as, say, his Number 1 value; a slightly darker foreground as the Number 2 value; still darker masses of foliage as a Number 3; deep shadows, as Number 4. This rub-in gives the artist a simple silhouette which he tries to preserve while he elaborates the details of his picture. When he has thus established his large scheme of values he can proceed to develop high lights, half lights, penumbra, shadow, reflected lights, accents, translucencies.

If the painter also understands what impressionism has taught about colour values, he will all the time be registering the warm and the cool of what he sees. If his Number 1 value, as above, the sky, is mostly cold — that is, predominantly blue or blue-green — it is probable that the Number 4 value will also be cool, while in the foreground and on the sunlit portions of the foliage there will be yellow, orange, reddish and brown notes intermixed with the green. Those who paint indoors have somewhat different problems, but essentially their usual method is to start from a brisk rub-in, which should assure a logical framework of values on which to build a painting.

Certain modern painters have carried, or pretend to have carried, this study of values to tremendous lengths. A well-known American artist resident at Paris used to tell of his having counted off in advance 150 values for a picture which he was about to paint. So far as direct, visual appeal of a composition is concerned four large values are better than one hundred

subtly related values, and most painters wisely follow a simple pattern of masses. They proceed as a sculptor might who would make the large planes of his sitter's head and later, when these were properly related to each other, elaborate the lesser planes and gradations. This, interestingly, is very much the plan which Vermeer followed, though probably without a preliminary rub-in.

He paid attention also to colour tone, which is not identical with dark-and-light tone — the latter called by the Japanese *notan*. Herein is something differentiating Vermeer from other painters of long ago. The old masters simplified nature by ignoring the colour shifts, the interplay of warm and cool, which anybody can see by looking closely into shadows and half-tones. They habitually painted all their shadows of a rich brownish tone, giving no regard to the local or transient colour which an observant person might have liked to register.

An extreme of this brownness of tone may be seen in the works of Ribera, but even so subtle and perceptive a painter as Velázquez was little preoccupied with the colour value of his shadows, unless in his latest work. Rubens noticed that indoor lights are generally cooler than the shadows; that the darker half lights often come of a pearly, ashen tone, and that the indoor shadows, including their reflected lights, are warm. This knowledge, not very profound, was reduced by Rubens to a formula. It was a first step in the study of colour values.

Vermeer went much further than Rubens in this direction. He endeavoured to make each tone as it appeared, whether warm, neutral or cool. His quest, unlike that of the modern impressionists, had no scientific basis. He merely observed the appearance of things more closely and more naively than they had been observed before his time.

Because, since about 1870, preoccupation with colour values has made modern painting quite different from that which one has in mind when one speaks of the old masters, the rediscovery of Vermeer has been accompanied by much enthusiasm for his comprehension of the colouristic realities, or colour values. Any painter who is himself familiar with the problems of registration of masses and spots of colour realizes that, beyond almost any other man who ever painted, Vermeer understood light and shade in relation to both their dark-and-light and their warm-and-cool aspects. Literary critics have praised his interiors for their "atmosphere," but practically speaking there is no atmosphere in an interior! The distance between the foreground and the background is so slight that the intervening air does not modify it at all. What the unwary call "atmosphere" in an interior is really its colouristic light and shade, its chromatic *chiaroscuro*. This *clair-obscur*, as the French translate it, seems to the layman such an obvious condition of things that he hardly realizes how necessary it is for the painter to learn to compare rightly the obscurity of forms in the shadow with their emergence in the half-tone and in the light.

Vermeer's method of arrangement was decidedly personal. It was unlike that of his European predecessors and contemporaries. It resembled, in qualities of design and *notan*, the oriental masters with some of whom, as a son of Delft, he almost certainly was familiar. It was enough like the departure from conventional occidental pattern which James McNeill Whistler later made in direct consequence of his study of Japanese prints to cause many observers to comment upon the compositional resemblances between Vermeer and Whistler.

This highly individual method of arrangement seems to many to have been Vermeer's outstanding achievement. It deserves,

surely, extended exposition in terms which the professional artist should comprehend and which the layman through observation and appreciation can understand.

The words "composition" and "design" are often used as if they are interchangeable, but in reality each connotes something rather different from the other.

Composition is a composing or pushing-about of the various parts of a picture — of the items of main interest and of secondary and tertiary interest — in such manner that the picture explains itself and tells its story to the eye.

Design is the preliminary arranging or studying out of an agreeable or significant pattern, a framework for the composition of the picture. It includes the disposing of the dark masses so that they will balance agreeably with the light masses. In modern commercial art, as is well known, the designer makes great case of having the dark masses of his poster or advertising placard properly related to the light masses.

The design — the pattern, so to say — of certain of Vermeer's works is superlatively beautiful. This excellence of theirs is the more remarkable as it is a quality which does not appear in the work of most of the older Netherland painters. Their pictures are often admirably composed; they convey their motive and their story. They are sometimes composed subtly and elusively. Yet the ablest of these painters were uninterested, as a rule, in the underlying pattern of their compositions. An exception among them, in this regard, was Fabritius, Vermeer's fellow townsman; and this circumstance gives one reason for supposing that Fabritius may have been intimate with Vermeer. The methods of the two men as designers, however, were not closely alike, and Vermeer excelled in both composition and design. As his subjects were usually of the simplest nature, his compositional problems were not particularly intricate. Whatever

story there was to tell, this was of the shortest and simplest; the intrigue required no elaborate working out. The design, on the other hand, of a Vermeer, is often subtle, highly original, and, in his best works, very beautiful.

For their qualities of design one thinks especially of the *Music Lesson*, formerly in Windsor Castle, the National Gallery *Lady at the Virginals*, the *Pearl Necklace*, Berlin Gallery, the *Woman at the Casement*, Metropolitan Museum, the *Reader*, Amsterdam Gallery, and the *Girl Reading a Letter*, Dresden Gallery. Some of Vermeer's works, withal, which contain his best painting, are not remarkable in design. Thus, the weakly patterned *Studio* of the Czernin Collection seems to have been painted for the sheer pleasure of the painting.

As Vermeer's design and composition are so original and personal, it is strange that his work was ever mistaken for that of other men — Terborch, de Hooch, and Metsu, for instance, each of whom had his own mode of composition.

Terborch, as a rule, employed his background merely as a foil for the human figure. He made wonderful little figures which are the whole thing in his pictures; to them the background is entirely subsidiary, delightful as it may be in its manner of staying back. In planning a composition, Terborch apparently at first arranged his mannikins agreeably and then bethought himself of a fitting background.

De Hooch's plan of composing was quite different from Terborch's. A picture presented itself to his mind as an interior composed of beautiful lines and *chiaroscuro*. His figures look like afterthoughts, as in the one — *Dutch Interior with Soldiers* — at the National Gallery, London, in which lines of the background can be seen showing through one of the principal figures. De Hooch, in point of fact, did not do the figure at all well. He is a painter of interiors, *par excellence*.

Vermeer felt the figure and the background to be of equal importance. Neither could exist without the other in one of his paintings. Both are integral parts of the well-designed composition. A map or a picture on the wall is conceived, in a Vermeer, to be as essential and significant as a head or a figure. These, in fact, are ordered compositions which must have been made on the spot. One can fancy Vermeer placing his model around in the room, or observing her from various viewpoints, until the scheme of things took on a shape appealing to him. His one-figure effects, incidentally, are his most personal.

A departure from the compositional conventions of his time which especially distinguished Vermeer was his habit of sometimes cutting his principal figure halfway down, so that only a portion of the person appears in the picture. This practice was almost unknown to Terborch and de Hooch. The former used his little figures to compose a comedy. It was essential that they should all be there, from head to foot. De Hooch's conception of a figure was that there should be a room all around it. Vermeer cut off his figures whenever and wherever the design happened to demand such treatment.

Reference has been made to certain points of resemblance of Vermeer's work to the Japanese. These are not altogether conclusive. The differences as well as the likenesses between their method and his are marked.

The Japanese designers, as of the Korin screens or the Ukiyoye prints, customarily base their pattern on some diagonal line which they very skilfully modify by opposed diagonals and by charming arabesques thrown against it. Vermeer's design, on the contrary, is based on a scheme of uprights and verticals. His composition, of course, always includes light and shade, which the Japanese habitually ignore.

Yet, however different it may be in compositional manner

from the Ukiyoye, Vermeer's painting does indubitably, to some extent, resemble Far Eastern art. Both these forms of design reveal a *désaxé* scheme of arrangement; elements of the picture straggle into it from outside and are related to each other without reference to a central axis. Both give an impression of design or pattern that is a primary motive and not a sort of by-product of the story-telling.

Vermeer, as has been said, was quite certainly in a position to see works of art from the Orient. The blue and white Delft pottery of the seventeenth century was avowedly based on blue and white porcelains from the Far East. Vermeer must have known the potteries, and as a man interested in things artistic and as a member of the Guild of St. Luke, he surely had friends among the potters, many of whom, as has already been mentioned, were members of the Guild. He was so situated as to have observed many oriental designs which could have suggested to him his own schemes of pattern.

The Japanese designers, as just said, excelled in *notan*. This signifies an agreeable, well-planned distribution and balance of the light masses and dark masses of a composition. In Vermeer's best paintings, one is struck by the evidence that he gave much attention to balance, shape and rhythm among his masses. Like the Japanese, he composed with dark masses that are *per se* dark; light masses, *per se* light. He did not rely on dark shadows, as Rembrandt and also some of the Italian masters often did, to get him out of a compositional difficulty by indicating a murky passage due to temporary or accidental conditions. Although Vermeer understood *chiaroscuro*, as every painter in Holland did, and made use of this knowledge, yet as a matter of composition most of his pictures would have looked just as well if painted in flat local tones after the style of a Japanese print.

This excellence of Vermeer's *notan* is more notable in his later middle period than in his early period. Herein is a circumstance to cause one to suspect that some outside influence, such as his discovery of oriental designs at the potteries, came into his life after he was well started as a painter.

A characteristic of Vermeer's pattern which further reveals a possible indebtedness to the Orient is that he habitually designs in dark against light. This is the reverse of the method of nearly all the other Netherland painters. They employed a dark background as a foil to a light figure. Except Vermeer — and, in one or two examples, Metsu — Fabritius is perhaps the only one among them who gave preference to arrangements of dark against light. This marked peculiarity of Vermeer's can be seen in the *Pearl Necklace*, the *Reader*, Rijks Museum, the *Woman at the Casement* and several others. Even when he did not dispose his figures to loom dark against a paler background he crowded masses of lower tone in the foreground in such fashion as to make a dark silhouette against a more luminous middle distance.

The factual content of a good Vermeer offers another reason for stressing the resemblance of his pattern to that of the Japanese. Like the latter he had a habit of putting into his picture precisely the elements needed to create a pictorial unity, a balance, and of leaving out everything else. He was quite unlike other Hollanders in this regard. Jan Steen's canvases pullulate cats, dogs, bird-cages, beer-mugs, people. Metsu often forgot reserve and good taste as he introduced trivial accessories into his market scenes. Terborch had more of Vermeer's restraint, but his little canvases are like scenes at the theatre rather than pictorial compositions. Vermeer alone sought simplicity of arrangement. We, like Vermeer, have come to feel that a pictorial composition should not be cluttered up with extraneous



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Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE PEARL NECKLACE
KAISER FRIEDRICH MUSEUM, BERLIN

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[Text on Page 187]



accessories but should have its main elements stated as simply as possible.³

Vermeer was an original colourist. In the *Pearl Necklace*, Berlin, the yellowish jacket is balanced by a yellowish curtain in the upper left corner, and so in nearly all his works one sees evidences of a quite personal system of balances or *rappels* of colour. A blue in one place is counterweighted by a blue elsewhere; and if a yellow note has been set down in one part of the picture there will usually be a touch of yellow somewhere else to recall it. These *rappels* are traceable in painting after painting.

His compositions are often based on a strong blue — a colour which many designers have thought difficult or dangerous to handle. Fear of blue was perhaps unlikely in a man of Delft, where among the potteries an artist could well have acquired a perception of the possibilities of blue in relation to white. It may not be accidental that a number of the Vermeer paintings are built upon this motive common in Delft ware — blue oppositions upon a dull greyish-white wall.

Vermeer, nevertheless, went further than to create simple colour symphonies, after the manner of Whistler's nocturnes. He frequently felt the need of a cutting colour, a complemen-

³ In this treatment of Mr. Hale's original comment upon the quite plausible analogies between Vermeer's art and some of that of the Far East, I have had in mind that Vermeer conceivably might have seen screens by Sansetsu and Tanyu, who were his Japanese contemporaries, and it would not have been strange if he caught something of the enthusiasm with which in 1662 the Delft potters received large imports of the so-called Imari ware from the bazaar at Nagasaki. They were also at this period beginning to import Chinese porcelains. Writing of the possible influence of oriental art on Carel Fabritius Sir Charles Holmes is quoted by Mr. Wilenski as follows: "The importation of Chinese porcelain by the Dutch East India Company had begun to compete seriously with the native industry. Then one Aelbrecht de Keizer . . . set about imitating the decorating and modeling of the Chinese pieces, and with such success that in a very few years the Delft ware in the oriental style became widely famous. It was inevitable that Fabritius at Delft . . . should come into close contact with the leading potters and with the oriental art which they were then studying so closely." F. W. C.

tary, in his colour harmonies. With uncanny intuition he realized that yellow, not orange, was the complementary of the kind of blue he used. He thus anticipated certain modern studies of the laws of colour such as, for instance, the Schistoscope of Bruecke, which gives yellow as the complementary of lapis lazuli.

Given blue, yellow, grey, white and black, Vermeer possessed his basic colours, or tones, on which most of his compositions are built. He had his own ways of obviating any feeling of emptiness which this limited range might have seemed to impose. Observe how, in the *Pearl Necklace*, he discreetly introduces behind the table a chair which is of a dull greenish tone with blue and yellow touches; and how there is a little knot of red ribbon in the girl's hair which gives piquancy to the entire colour combination. Note, again, that Vermeer sometimes uses a crumpled rug of red, with touches of yellow, blue, white and black, which, to use an old country phrase, "cuts the grease" of an otherwise too suave colour harmony. The rug, incidentally, is likely to be placed for the most part in shadow, so that its red tones are not dominant.

The appeal of such colour symphonies to the modern taste is illustrated in a passage in one of the letters of Vincent van Gogh, Post-Impressionist, in which, speaking of the *Reader* in the Rijks Museum, he says: "Do you know of a painter called Jan van de Meer? He painted a very distinguished and beautiful Dutch woman in pregnancy. The scale of colours of this strange artist consists of blue, lemon yellow, pearl grey, black, and white. It is true in the few pictures he painted the whole range of his palette is to be found; but it is just as characteristic of him to place a lemon yellow, a dull blue and light grey together as it is of Velázquez to harmonise black, white, gray and pink."

This poignant use, to which van Gogh refers, of lemon yel-

low is one of his technical achievements. Certain theorists have asserted that a clear, saturated, light yellow cannot be successfully used in a colour composition. The answer to such an assertion is that a yellow of this kind has been successfully employed in many compositions. Not only in Vermeer is this clear yellow found, but also, used in a different way, it can be observed in Terborch and in some of the works of Murillo.

Vermeer, to sum up his attainments as a colourist, is one of the few painters adept at composing a picture colouristically. Most of the figure compositions of other Netherland artists impress one as somewhat grim and grey in tone, though they have patches of colour worked in here and there to enliven the sombreness. Sometimes such punctuating colours were happily chosen; sometimes not. Vermeer nearly always chose his colour felicitously. Thinking, indeed, of the great colourists of European history, one realizes that they followed one or another of three ways of composing: the Venetian way, Vermeer's, and Whistler's.

The Venetians composed with a full bouquet of colour; they managed almost always to get all the important colours into their pictures: a rich crimson red, a cool yellow, a peacock blue, a warm bronzed green, a rusty orange, even a little purple of sorts, not to speak of plenty of white and a bit of black. All these colours they somehow harmonised — perhaps because they were not squeamish about modifying the tones to suit their book.

Whistler's colour arrangements have almost nothing of the glorious complexity of the Venetians'; they are quite handsome, but one sees that this artist trifled with but a few hues at a time. His titles are descriptive of what he sought to do: *Arrangement in blue and gold*; *Arrangement in purple and rose*; *Nocturne — opal and silver*. These are very lovely, but Whistler with-

out doubt avoided some of the difficult problems of colour composition.

Vermeer's conception of composing in colour was different from that held either by the Venetians or by Whistler. His ideal was to achieve a full chord of colour, with most of the available tones present and beautifully arranged. The originality of his accomplishment lay in the success with which he made each tone true. There is in his work no keying up of one colour, no muting of another colour, in the interest of harmony. He chose an arrangement which appealed to him and then painted it as it appeared to him.

Most so-called colourists are in the habit of painting a colour note as it does not really appear in the hope that it will "go" well with the general colour scheme. Vermeer achieved the difficult arrangement of a group of colour tones each true to nature and beautiful in effect. He presumably was not conscious of being markedly different from his contemporaries. He painted subjects similar to those of his national school. The basis of his technique, and especially his manner of laying in a picture, was what had been taught him by some competent master. Where he varied from the others was in his profound feeling for design, his intuition for colour values, his indifference to anecdote, his bulldog way of hanging to a thing until it was thoroughly well done.

VII · *Vermeer and Modern Painting*

USING THE TERM "MODERN art" in a somewhat broader sense than when it connotes solely the expressionistic cults that have arisen since the advent of impressionism, one can safely say that Vermeer's influence over modern artists has been and is profound. Their preoccupation with pattern and the ideal, to use a favorite phrase of the late John LaFarge, has made them, almost one and all, ready to appreciate the Chinese and other oriental masters, and to be somewhat contemptuous of the canons and conventions of classic European art. Vermeer's design, as is very apparent, was so motivated as to appeal to those who find something supremely lovely in a Sung painting or a Korin screen.

The chief difference of opinion, indeed, which can subsist among present-day painters regarding Vermeer concerns the degree of finish and "likeness" with which he invested his admittedly fine pattern — concerns, in brief, his ideals of workmanship. There are, as is well known, in this century two markedly divergent schools or modes of thought in painting. One of these devotes itself to expression of quaint conceptions, or "evocations," of fancies and "inventions" done in a manner that may be, but not necessarily is, vaguely suggestive of nature. These painters have sometimes taken to themselves, or the literary critics have taken it for them, the style of "modernists." Another group seeks to do essentially what Vermeer did: starting with an excellent design, to give to the elements of this the exact appearance of nature. To these latter artists, to those who in the argot of the studios endeavour to "make it like," Vermeer

is, naturally, the greatest of masters; his name, a rallying cry. To them his approach to his art, his point of view, seems altogether logical and right. They recognize that in his simple, and doubtless unconscious, way, he met and solved the chief difficulties of the art of painting.

Those who have explored the possibilities of combining sound pattern with competent representation, and who do not confuse "making it like" with cheap and meretricious realism, have reason, as they study Vermeer, to "rise up and call him blessed." True, his perception of colour values is hardly so acute as that of some who followed him. He had an intuition of colour rather than one of the well-thought-out methods which many painters now employ for their own guidance. He made up, nevertheless, for any lack of a consistent colour theory by looking at the thing before him so hard and so often that he came, in the end, to understand it. And what one understands one can render.

One especially modern aspect of Vermeer's art is its avoidance of story-telling. There is, to be sure, in every one of his paintings, except the *Studio*, some anecdotal thread, but it is tenuous. Vermeer could hardly escape, in the Holland of his day, the necessity of seeming to offer his patrons a story, whether classical, religious or domestic. But it is clear that his anecdotal subject did not particularly entertain him, and that his artistic motive did greatly interest him. The design, the colour scheme, the rendering — all these engaged his attention and enthusiasm.

This indifference to the literary quality of a painting was unusual, it hardly need be said, among the Netherland painters. De Hooch, indeed, is almost the only other artist of Holland who seemed as neglectful as was Vermeer of anecdote for the anecdote's sake. Jan Steen, Terborch and Metsu

stressed their stories. Vermeer came as near to having his little figures do nothing at all as one well could, unless they sat with folded hands. A young girl reads a letter, writes one or receives it from the hand of a serving maid — that accounts for half a dozen of his pictures. A young woman plays with pearls about her neck, she opens a casement, she pours milk from a jug, she takes a glass of wine from a gallant's hand — these are the everyday stories conveyed in other paintings. In each one just enough anecdote is involved to amuse those who must have a story, but the intrigue of the subject is never so intricate or arresting as to endanger the effectiveness of the piece as a work of art.

Vermeer thus is in favour with those who believe in art for art's sake. His painting served no literary, ecclesiastical or other propagandist cause. If a picture of his were not well made it would be just nothing at all. Being, as it is, superlatively made, it is one of the few flawless masterpieces.

A conception of the value of impersonality in art, shared by some but not all modern painters, animated Jan Vermeer. His paintings are personal because made by a very great man; but the personality in them is a by-product. The artist did not seek to obtrude his personal equation. Hardly any modernist, hardly any so-called academician of the present age, has accomplished as nearly absolute an impersonality of technique as has Vermeer. In most paintings, by whomever made, one perceives the artist's liking for tricks of handling, his addiction to mannerisms. These latter often make the signature on a canvas unnecessary. Vermeer, it is true, had marked mannerisms, but these are a product of his desire to record an aspect of nature, not to exhibit his technical brilliance.

He was, indeed, almost Asiatic in his willingness to bestow endless labour upon the perfecting of minute details. He differs in this respect from practically all moderns of whatever school

— in the imperturbability, serenity and finish of his work. The modern painter may even be distrusted, and may distrust himself, if he is not violent, perturbed, hasty in execution. Vermeer's work is free from this spirit of unrest. He painted for about twenty years. His known product is of some two-score works; it is not certain that he produced many more. The paintings which he left are too patiently wrought, too carefully studied, to allow it to be supposed that they could have been turned out of the studio in rapid succession. They are carried further than anything that is done now. This, in fact, is where brilliant modern pieces, obviously inspired by Vermeer, may fail. They have an effectiveness like his, often much of his skill in arrangement; sometimes qualities which he lacked; but they do not have his patient finish, his well-nigh oriental serenity.

Time, one is sure, could have had no significance for Vermeer. He was a congener of Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosopher who perfected a walking stick. While the philosopher sought the stick the world came to an end. While he peeled the stick properly the solar system fell into the sun; and while he polished it as it should be polished the universe blew up; but Sir Philosopher had a perfect walking stick!

Of like nature Vermeer's creative soul must have been. He had a passion for rightness of facture, and a knowledge and intelligence which, added to his diligence, allowed him to attain to it in larger measure than others have done. His work, critically observed, seems to be much more closely finished in essential respects than that of the van Eycks, for example, who are popularly supposed to be miracles of elaboration. These and other "primitives," for all their hardness of execution, depended on obvious tricks of rendering. If they painted, let us say, the gold thread in some drapery, they ticked off the high lights all of the same value with a skilful touch, and quite without observa-





tion of what they actually could have seen and recorded. When Vermeer painted a sleeve shot with gold thread the value, shape and edge of each touch was set forth as the result of a separate intellectual effort.

Vermeer's finish, then — and the term is used without meaning smoothness, though highly finished things ordinarily are smooth — was far beyond anything that is arrived at today. The painter of this century sees dimly how Vermeer did it, but he is unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices of time and mind.

Some regard this perfection of finish in the spirit of that rich young man in Holy Writ who asked what he should do to be saved, but who, when told to sell all and follow Christ, "went away very sorrowful." Others are not even sorrowful; they pretend that they do not think finish worth while — they disclose that for them the grapes are sour.

However his technical qualities may be evaluated, whether for imitation, general admiration or disdain, Vermeer remains, in the classification of artists of history, the Sphinx that Théophile Thoré called him. It is not only the mystery of his life that one cannot penetrate; one cannot penetrate very far into the mystery of his art. In the soul of the man persisted this extraordinary genius, so different from the genius of other men; a genius that did not reveal itself by painting impossibilities or ruffling it with the night watch, but that showed itself in an acuteness of observation which made him see more truly than other artists of his time could see. And with that went something more: an appreciation of the rightness of things, in line, in colour and in form; and a unique passion for colour, personally preferred — colder and more aesthetic than that of other men.

It can be supposed that Vermeer died with his secret undiscovered by his artist and lay contemporaries — except

that people in a puzzled way liked his pictures for, as they supposed, the perfection of the technique.

And, as the French say, when one is dead, it is for a long time. Certainly it was so for him, even for his fame. Yet if, somewhere, in no-man's land, a pallid ghost — Vermeer yclept — should chance to linger; if he thinks at all of the little doings of this earth, it perhaps comes not amiss to him that the perfection of his work, rather than any praise of men, did in the end bring these works to their own. To an artist there is peculiar satisfaction in forcing recognition by the sheer merit of his handiwork. Certainly with Vermeer this has come about; for by his works we know him.



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A GIRL ASLEEP

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

(Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913)



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A LADY WITH A LUTE

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

(Bequest of Collis P. Huntington, 1925)

[Text on Page 113]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

ALLEGORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK
(Bequest of Colonel Michael Friedsam, 1931)

[Text on Page 115]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

LADY WRITING
MORGAN COLLECTION, NEW YORK

[Text on Page 118]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

GIRL INTERRUPTED AT HER MUSIC
sometimes called THE SINGING LESSON, THE MUSIC LESSON,
A GENTLEMAN AND A YOUNG LADY

FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE SOLDIER AND THE LAUGHING GIRL
sometimes called OFFICER AND LAUGHING GIRL
FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK

[Text on Page 121]

WEST



EAST

THE MAP SHOWN ON THE WALL IN *The Soldier and the Laughing Girl*
FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK

This reproduction is made from a double-page map (in the possession of Ralph T. Hale of Winchester, Massachusetts), taken from a Blaeu atlas printed at Amsterdam in 1641. As will be readily observed, west is at the top of the map. The wall-map shown in Vermeer's painting was a larger engraving substantially from the same original and in addition to its map-sticks has a legend at the top and cartouches along the other sides.



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A LADY AND A MAID-SERVANT
FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK

[Text on Page 123]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE GEOGRAPHER
also called THE ASTRONOMER
COLLECTION OF E. JOHN MAGNIN, NEW YORK

[Text on Page 125]



Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

A YOUNG WOMAN READING
BACHE COLLECTION, NEW YORK

[Text on Page 130]



Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

HEAD OF A YOUNG BOY
BACHE COLLECTION, NEW YORK

[Text on Page 131]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE GIRL WITH THE RED HAT
also called THE GIRL WITH THE RED FEATHER
COLLECTION OF THE A. W. MELLON EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE
TRUST, WASHINGTON

[Text on Page 132]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE SMILING GIRL

also known as HEAD OF A YOUNG GIRL

COLLECTION OF THE A. W. MELLON EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE
TRUST, WASHINGTON

[Text on Page 134]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE LACE MAKER

COLLECTION OF THE A. W. MELLON EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE
TRUST, WASHINGTON

[Text on Page 135]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE CONCERT

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM, BOSTON

[Text on Page 136]



Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. E. W. EDWARDS, CINCINNATI

[Text on Page 139]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A WOMAN WEIGHING GOLD

sometimes called A WOMAN WEIGHING PEARLS

WIDENER COLLECTION, ELKINS PARK, NEAR PHILADELPHIA



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A YOUNG GIRL WITH A FLUTE

WIDENER COLLECTION, ELKINS PARK, NEAR PHILADELPHIA

[Text on Page 143]



Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

A LADY PLAYING THE GUITAR
also called GIRL WITH MANDOLIN

THE JOHN G. JOHNSON ART COLLECTION, PHILADELPHIA

[Text on Page 144]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE GUITAR PLAYER

also known as THE LUTE PLAYER

IVEAGH BEQUEST, KEN WOOD, HIGHGATE, LONDON

[Text on Page 147]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A YOUNG LADY AT THE VIRGINALS
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

[Text on Page 154]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A YOUNG LADY SEATED AT THE SPINET
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

[Text on Page 156]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A LOVE LETTER
also called YOUNG LADY WRITING
BEIT COLLECTION, LONDON

[Text on Page 158]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

YOUNG GIRL AT A SPINET
BEIT COLLECTION, LONDON

[Text on Page 159]



Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

HEAD OF A YOUNG MAN

(possibly a portrait of Simon Decker)

COLLECTION OF ERNEST W. SAVORY, BRISTOL, ENGLAND

[Text on Page 160]



OLD ENGRAVING FROM THE PRECEDING PORTRAIT

[Text on Page 160]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A YOUNG GIRL

*Formerly in the Collection of CHARLES E. CARRUTHERS, BATHEASTON,
SOMERSET, ENGLAND; in the possession of ANTHONY F. REYRE, LONDON*

[Text on Page 162]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF MARY AND MARTHA
NATIONAL GALLERY OF SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH

[Text on Page 163]



Bernardo Cavallino (1622–1654)

THE DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH
MUSEUM OF NAPLES



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE TOILETTE OF DIANA

ROYAL GALLERY OF PAINTINGS, THE MAURITSHUIS, THE HAGUE

[Text on Page 171]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL
ARENBERG COLLECTION, BRUSSELS

[Text on Page 182]



*Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft; now generally attributed to
Nicolaes Maes*

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN
MUSEUM OF ART, BRUSSELS

[Text on Page 183]



Pieter de Hooch

BOY WITH POMEGRANATES
WALLACE COLLECTION, LONDON

[Text on Page 184]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE LACE MAKER
THE LOUVRE, PARIS

[Text on Page 184]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE ASTRONOMER
ROTHSCHILD COLLECTION, PARIS

[Text on Page 186]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A GIRL DRINKING WITH A GENTLEMAN
KAISER FRIEDRICH MUSEUM, BERLIN



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE COQUETTE
also called THE GIRL WITH THE WINE GLASS
BRUNSWICK GALLERY

[Text on Page 190]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE COURTESAN

*also called THE PROCURESS, sometimes known as SCENE IN
A TAVERN, and A YOUNG WOMAN IN A YELLOW JACKET*

STATE PICTURE GALLERY, DRESDEN

[Text on Page 193]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

THE ASTRONOMER
STÄDEL ART INSTITUTE, FRANKFORT

[Text on Page 197]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

A PAINTER'S STUDIO
sometimes called PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
COLLECTION OF COUNT CZERNIN, VIENNA

[Text on Page 200]



Jan Vermeer of Delft

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BUDA-PESTH

[Text on Page 204]



Carel Fabritius

THE GOLDFINCH

ROYAL GALLERY OF PAINTINGS, THE MAURITSHUIS, THE HAGUE

[Text on Page 60]

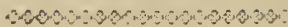


Probably by Leendert van der Cooghen; by some critics attributed to Michael Sweerts

A FAMILY GROUP

NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

This picture was formerly cut in two. The left half was presented to the National Gallery, under the title of *The Lesson*, by Vermeer, by C. Fairfax Murray in 1900; the right half was purchased from M. Fliersheim, Paris, as *A Family Group* in 1910. The two parts were joined together in 1915.



C A T A L O G U S

V A N

S C H I L D E R Y E N ,

Volgt de 16. M. 1696. van.

- 1 Een Juffrouw die goud weegt, in een kasje van J. vander Meer van Delft, extraordinaer konstig en kragtig geschildert. 135 - 0
- 2 Een Mejd die Melk uitgiet, in nemende goet van dito. 175 - 0
- 3 't Portrait van Vermeer in een Kamer met verscheyde bywerk ongemeen fraai van hem geschildert. 45 - 0
- 4 Een speelende Juffrouw op een Guiteer, heel goet van den zelve. 70 - 0
- 5 Daer een Seigneure zyn handen wast, in een doofsende Kamer, met beelden, konstig en raet van dito. 95 - 0
- 6 Een speelende Juffrouw op de Clavecimbael in een Kamer, met een roeluttesend Monsieur door den zelve. 80 - 0
- 7 Een Juffrouw die door een Mejd een brief gebragt word, van duu. 70 - 0
- 8 Een dronke slapende Mejd aan een Tafel, van den zelve. 62 - 0
- 9 Een vroelyk geselschap in een Kamer, kragtig en goet van dito. 75 - 0
- 10 Een Muiscende Meistr. en Juffr. in een Kamer, van den zelve. 81 - 0
- 11 Een Soldaat met een liggende Meysje, zeer fraai van dito. 44 - 10
12 Een

- 12 Een Jufferie dat speldewerkt, van den zelve. 24 - 0
- 13 De Oude Kerk 't Amsterdam, konstig van Emanuel de Wit. 74 - 0
- 14 't Graf van de oude Prins tot Delft, van den zelve. 52 - 0
- 15 Nog een Kerk van dito. 34 - 0
- 16 Een Jufferie van Nefcher, zyn beste trant. 164 - 0
- 17 Een Vrouwerje dat naait van Gerard ter Burch. 55 - 0
- 18 Iveretia van de oude Palma. 30 - 10
- 19 Een Geselschap van Gerards, heel uitvoerig. 26 - 0
- 20 Een Zeehaven van Adam Pynacker. 42 - 0
- 21 Beelden van Andres Both. 24 - 0
- 22 Een Triumf wagon van de vier getyden van 't Jaar in een Landschap, den aart van Poussin. 82 - 0
- 23 Een geselschap van drie Persoonen van Gerard Terburgh. 80 - 0
- 24 Bazeza van Jacob de Loo. 104 - 0
- 25 Christoffel van Spanjolet. 13 - 0
- 26 Een Grot met Beelden en Beelden van P. de Laer (anders) Bamboos. 104 - 0
- 27 Dierne na de Iacbe geen doordenzelven. 41 - 0
- 28 Pomona en Virtumus van Argous tot Romeen geschildert. 17 - 10
- 29 Venus met Kinderjes van dito. 21 - 0
- 30 Een Italiaens Barbierje van denzelven. 42 - 0
- 31 De Stad Delft in perfectieft, te sien van de Zuyd-zy, door J. vander Meer van Delft. 200 - 0
- 32 Een Gesicht van een Hays staende in Delft, door denzelven. 78 - 10
- 33 Een Gesicht van eenige Hayfen van dito. 48 - 0

C 2

35 Een

- 35 Een Schryvende Juffrouw heel goet van denzelven. 63 - 0
- 36 Een Paleerende dito, soet fraey van dito. 70 - 0
- 37 Een Speelende Juffrouw op de Clavecimbael van dito. 48 - 10
- 38 Een Tronie in Antique Kleederen, ongemeen konstig. 36 - 0
- 39 Nog een dito Vermeer. 17 - 0
- 40 Een weerga van denzelven. 17 - 0
- 41 Een groot Landschap van Simon de Vlieger, zyn alderbeste. 26 - 0
- 42 Een kleyn der van denzelven. 37 - 10
- 43 Nog een van dito. 30 - 0
- 44 Nog een grooter van dito. 37 - 5
- 45 Een Tronie van Rembrandt. 7 - 5
- 46 Een Geesfing Christi op Steen van Albano, ongemeen goet. 31 - 0
- 47 Een St. Jans Onthoofding op Steen, van Domenico. 20 - 0
- 48 Andromeda met veel Beelden van Gasparo Celio. 40 - 0
- 49 David met 't Hooft van Goliad, den trant van P. Veronée. 9 - 10
- 50 't Portrait van Erasmus van Rotterdam van A. B. Daur. 18 - 0
- 51 Een Tronie van Holbecc. 26 - 0
- 52 Een Stervende Santic van Raphael Vani. 12 - 0
- 53 Twee Italiaensche Landschappen van Gaspar Poussin. 46 - 0
- 54 Twee dito van denzelven. 64 - 0
- 55 Twee Italiaensche Landschappes. 4 - 5
- 56 Vier Waterverwe van Casparus Witel, Gesichte tot Rome. 38 - 10
- 57 Een groox kapitaal stuk, zynde Diana met haar Nim-

- Nimphen, levens groox, door de Vos. 52 - 0
- 58 Een Landschap met Beelden van Roelandt Sarrj. 41 - 0
- 59 Een Diluvium of Zundvloet van Jordans. 92 - 0
- 60 Pestonnen van Vruchten en Bloemen van de Rieg. 52 - 10
- 61 Een Landschap van Moucheron de Oude. 40 - 0
- 62 Een dito wat kleyn der van denzelven. 40 - 0
- 63 Een kapitaal stuk van Jan Steen, de Koning drinkt. 129 - 0
- 64 Een Barbiers Winkelje van denzelven. 52 - 0
- 65 Een Hoerhuyse van dito. 52 - 0
- 66 Een Geselschapje van Ollade. 47 - 0
- 67 Paerdes en Beeldjes van Philip Wouwerman. 40 - 0
- 68 Eenige Vruchten van Guillelmo van Aell. 22 - 10
- 69 Ceres van Emanuel de Wit. 31 - 0
- 70 Een Pacuw en andere Vogels van M. de Hondeloeter. 110 - 0
- 71 Een weerga van denzelven. 80 - 0
- 72 Een brief Landschap van Jacob Effelsen. 40 - 0
- 73 Een Italiaensche Zeehavenje van Gio Bapista Wenck. 26 - 10
- 74 Een kapitaal Landschap van Moucheron. 45 - 0
- 75 Visscherjes in een Landschap van Karel du Gardyn. 28 - 10
- 76 St. Jans Onthoofding van Fabricius. 20 - 0
- 77 De drie Koningen van David Teniers. 29 - 0
- 78 Nog een van denzelven. 37 - 0
- 79 Venus en Adonis van Jordans. 53 - 0
- 80 De Bruyloft van Cana, opeen kopere plaat door Van Balen. 48 - 0
- 81 Een Grot met Beelden van Thomas Wyk. 54 - 0

C 3

82 Een

A LIST OF PICTURES SOLD AT AMSTERDAM, MAY 16, 1696

At this sale twenty-one paintings by Vermeer were sold. The Vermeer items are Nos. 1 to 12 inclusive and 31 to 40 inclusive; for some reason, possibly the typesetter's error, no No. 34 is given. The list was published in Volume I, pp. 34-40, of Gerard Hoer's "Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen," two volumes, The Hague, 1752.

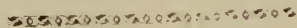
From the copy in the Library of Congress, Washington

[Text on Pages 97-102]

Catalogus van Schilderyen.	
22 Een curicus Landschap van de Oude Kuypert.	20 - 0
23 Antonius en Cleopatra van Jan Steen.	21 - 0
24 Twee Bloempotten van Mario de Fiori.	1 - 10
25 Twee dito van denzelfden.	10 - 0
26 Vruchten van Campidolio.	13 - 0
27 Garst-oeten van Morielje.	12 - 15
28 Eenige Beeldjes van Mattheys Wulfsaet.	41 - 10
29 Een dito van denzelfden.	70 - 0
30 Eenige Beelden in een Landschap van Bassano.	9 - 0
31 Prometheus van een Italiaensh Meester.	47 - 0
32 Achilles in den Tempel van dito.	60 - 0
33 Een Tronie van Carlo Carlotti.	17 - 3
34 De Hemelvaert Maria, van Van Zeeft.	31 - 0
35 Een Historie uyt de Passie van Heythus.	18 - 0
36 Eenige Beelden en beesten van Nicolaes Berghem.	35 - 0
37 Een dito van Adriaen van de Velde.	70 - 0
38 Een Landschap van Jan Lievensh de Oude.	18 - 15
39 Een dito van Piemont en Huchtenburg.	46 - 0
40 Een Blixem in een Landschap van Molyn.	20 - 10
41 Een Zee van Percecius.	40 - 10
42 Een Landschap van de Oude J. Lievensh.	16 - 10
43 't Vrouweje in Overfjel van Leonard Bramer.	3 - 5
44 Een Landschap van Vander As.	1 - 16
45 Een Kerkje van de Voe.	4 - 0
46 Eenige Beeldjes van Vander Viane.	3 - 15
47 Eenige Beeldjes op Marmer geschildert.	0 - 14
48 Een Landschapje van Jacob Nuytsdal.	3 - 6
49 Een dito van de Oude Hondskoeter.	3 - 3
112 Een	

Catalogus van Schilderyen.		39
110 Een Italiaensh Bruggetje.	3 - 3	
111 Een van Molyn.	5 - 15	
112 Een na de Fluweele Bruggel.	9 - 0	
113 Eenige Vogels en Landschap &c. van Begyn.	27 - 0	
114 Eenige Vruchten en stil Leeven by een Moor, van Juriaen van Sreeck zyn beelte.	36 - 10	
115 Een groot stuk zynde den Dam en 't Sadohup &c. van van Kessel, de Beelden van Abraham Storck.	104 - 0	
116 Een Bloempot van Elias van den Bruck.	35 - 0	
117 Een dito van denzelfden.	25 - 0	
118 Een Gevelschap van Jacob Torenvliet.	24 - 0	
119 Een School, zynde een weerga van denzelfden.	23 - 10	
120 Een Lieve Vrouw met een Kinje.	4 - 15	
121 De Herders bootfchap, van Jacomo Bassan.	11 - 0	
122 Andromeda van Palma.	19 - 0	
123 Venus en Adonis van Timen.	22 - 0	
124 Twee Italiaensh Tronie van Jacomo Tintoret.	24 - 0	
125 Nog twee dito brave Tronie.	6 - 0	
126 Een Autaar stukje, heel curicus van Cornelis Engelbrechts.	20 - 0	
127 Een Portrait van Poelenburgh, van B. Verelst.	24 - 10	
128 Een Landschap van Piemont.	65 - 0	
129 Een dito van Moucheron de Jonge.	33 - 0	
130 Petrus van Ayala.	5 - 10	
131 Democrict en Heraclyt van dito.	9 - 10	
132 Een Philosoph van denzelfden.	4 - 0	
C 4		138

Catalogus van Schilderyen.	
173 Een Maegd verbeeldende de vier Elementen van K. A.	0 - 0
174 Een Landschapje van Everdingen.	0 - 5



C A T A L O G U S

V A N

SCHILDERYEN,

Van Henrietta Popta, verkocht den 5 Junij 1797.
in Amsterdam.

1 Influxus en 't Krays tussen de Moundeniers, van Carel du Gardin, ongemeen koning en raer.	1730 - 0
2 Een Italiaensh Markt vol Beelden van Johannes I. ingelbagh, koning en goet.	304 - 0
3 Een dito Pleinruimte van dito, van denzelfden aert.	
4 Een Hemelvaert Christi, heel goet van Philip Wouwerman.	720 - 0
5 Een Pikares van derelve.	180 - 0
6 Een Schermuitteling van dito.	60 - 0
7 Nog een Zeeftand van derelve.	158 - 0
8 Beeldjes en Beelden van Bambouts.	117 - 0
9 Een Landschap met Beelden van Crabbeje.	101 - 0
10 't Bad van Caliste van Jacob van Loo.	73 - 0
11 Laban en Rachel van Pieter Luttman.	56 - 0
12 Een	

Pages 38, 39 and 40 of Volume 1 of Gerard Hoet's "Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen," completing the list of the pictures sold at Amsterdam May 16, 1696.

[Text on Pages 97-102]



(left) From an aquarelle in the town museum, Delft, painted prior to 1876. View from the marketplace, looking north through the Oudemanshuissteeg. At the left was the house where Vermeer was born (torn down, 1884) and in the background, on the Voldersgracht, was the Guild of St. Luke (torn down, 1876).



The illustration at right shows Oudemanshuissteeg in 1936. Vermeer's birthplace occupied what is now the left half of the street. In the background is a town schoolhouse.

THE ANCIENT AND THE PRESENT OUDEMANSHUISSTEEG



THE TOWN HALL OF DELFT
Taken from a point beside the New Church across the marketplace



On the steps of the Delft town hall



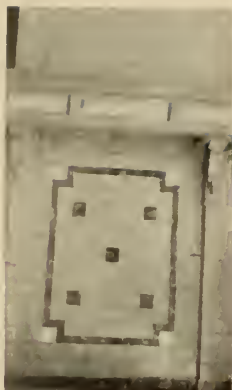
The shop of Mr. T. H. v.d. Meer, optician, on the north side of the marketplace, at the next corner west of the Oudemanshuissteeg (left)

THE VOLDERSGRACHT (right)
The second bridge leads from the Oudemanshuissteeg





NO. 25 OUDE LANGENDIJK (*left*)
Vermeer's home, where he died in
1675, at the corner of the little narrow
Moolepoort



MANTELPiece IN THE KITCHEN OF 25
OUDE LANGENDIJK (*right*)
The tiling is modern; the mantel-
piece is said to be of Vermeer's day



THE OUDE LANGENDIJK
across the street from No. 25



VERMEERSTRAAT
This modern street is east of the
Singel Gracht; farther north is Rem-
brandtstraat



Looking east along the Oude Lan-
gendijk, from Wijnhaven (*left*)

The house with the awning is that
in which Vermeer's widow died, on
the Verwersdijk. On the right is the
office of the *Delft Courant*. (*right*)





THE NEW CHURCH
where Vermeer was baptised October 31, 1632. At the left is seen a corner of the town hall (*left*)



THE OLD CHURCH
where Vermeer is buried. Note the leaning tower (*right*)



The 1936 view of Delft, taken from the point from which Vermeer painted his *View of Delft*



Looking across the Singel Gracht to the spot from which Vermeer painted his *View of Delft*



THE HOUSE OF MR. W. BRESSER
(Koster of the Lutheran Church),
an example of the domestic architecture of Vermeer's day (*right*)

THE OOST POORT
In the background at the right are the towers of the Old Church and the New Church (*left*)



Part II
HIS WORKS

I · *Vermeer's Paintings*

IN THE years immediately following Vermeer's death several of his paintings were mentioned in three separate records. In 1677, twenty-six works, belonging to his estate, were for sale; they were so offered by Joh. Columbier, believed to be Johannes Coelenbier, art dealer and painter, of Haarlem. Five years later, in 1682, nineteen Vermeer pictures were left by the bookseller, printer and publisher, Jacobus Abramse Dissius, at Delft, a member of the Guild of St. Luke, to which he had been admitted only two years earlier. Fourteen years later occurred at Amsterdam, May 16, 1696, an anonymous auction sale of 150 paintings by various artists among which twenty-one by Jan Vermeer of Delft were listed with descriptive titles. This list is contained in the "*Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen*," Gerard Hoet, The Hague, 1752, and is reproduced herewith from photostats (*Plates 53 and 54*). The appended translations of the descriptive phrases are quoted from previous publications concerning Vermeer; they are in some instances rendered rather freely.

This 1696 list of Vermeer paintings is very important as it sometimes adds documentary evidence to technical reasons for believing a work to be by Vermeer. At least as many as fifteen, and possibly eighteen or nineteen of the twenty-one items listed have been with some reason supposed to be among the recognized Vermeers.

The Amsterdam sale catalogue gives the subjects and in some cases brief comments, with the prices in florins. These prices are given below with their literal translation into pre-war

American dollars; it must, however, be borne in mind that the purchasing power of a florin in seventeenth century Netherlands was much higher than it has become in the twentieth century. Throughout this book the words "florin" and "gulden" are used interchangeably.

VERMEER'S PAINTINGS OF THE 1696 SALE

1 Een Juffrouw die goud weegt, in een Kasje van J. vander Meer van Delft, extraordinaer Konstig en Kragtig geschildert

155-0

1. *A Woman Weighing Gold*: "in a case, painted in an extraordinarily skilful and strong manner," 155 florins (\$62). No. 10 in Hofstede de Groot's *Catalogue Raisonné*. In Widener Collection.

2 Een Meyd die Melk uytgiet, uytnemende goet van dito

175-0

2. *A Maid-Servant Pouring out Milk*: "exceedingly good," 175 florins (\$70). H. de G. 17. Rijks Museum.

3 't Portrait van Vermeer in een Kamer met verscheyde bywerk ongemeen fraai van hem geschildert

45-0

3. *The Portrait of Vermeer*: "in a room with rich accessories painted in an unusually fine style," 45 florins (\$18). Assumed by many authorities to be the picture commonly called *A Painter's Studio*, or *The Artist's Studio*, of the Czernin Collection.

4 Een speelende Juffrouw op een Guiteer, heel goet van denzelve

70-0

4. *A Lady Playing the Guitar*: "very well painted," 70 florins (\$28). H. de G. 26. Paintings of this subject in the John-

son Collection, Philadelphia, and the Iveagh Collection, London, have been mentioned as possibly this picture.

5 Daer een Seigneur zyn handen wast, in een doorsiende Kamer, met Beelden, konstig en raer van dito 95-0

5. *An Interior*: "a gentleman washing his hands, with a vista and figures, painted in a skilful and unusual style," 95 florins (\$38). H. de G. 21. Undiscovered.

6 Een speelende Juffrouw op de Clavecimbael in een Kamer, met een tocluisterend Monsieur door den zelven 80-0

6. *An Interior*: "with a lady at the virginals and a gentleman listening," 80 florins (\$32). H. de G. 28. Possibly the so-called Windsor Vermeer, of the British Royal Collection, hung sometimes at Windsor Castle and sometimes at Buckingham Palace.

7 Een Juffrouw die door een Meyd een brief gebragt word, van dito 70-0

7. *A Lady to whom a Maid-Servant is bringing a Letter*: 70 florins (\$28). H. de G. 32. This could be the one in the Rijks Museum or the one now in the Frick Collection, New York (formerly of the Simon Collection, Berlin).

8 Een dronke Slapende Meyd aen een Tafel, van den zelven 62-0

8. *A Drunken Maid-Servant Asleep behind a Table*: 62 florins (\$24.60). H. de G. 48. Probably the Metropolitan Museum painting, from the Altman Collection.

9 Een vrolik geselchap in een Kamer, kragtig en goet van dito 73-0

9. *An Interior with Revellers*: "well painted in a strong manner," 73 florins (\$29.20). Undiscovered, unless it should be the *Courtesan* or the *Brunswick Coquette*.

10 Een Musicerende Monsr. en Juffr. in een Kamer van den
zelven 81-0

10. *An Interior*: "with a gentleman making music, and a lady," 81 florins (\$32.40). H. de G. 30. Undiscovered.

11 Een Soldaet met een laggent Meysje, zeer fraei van dito
44-10

11. *A Soldier with a laughing Girl*: "very fine," 44½ florins (\$17.60). H. de G. 39. Frick Collection, New York.

12 Een Juffertje dat speldewerht, van den zelven 28-0

12. *A Girl Making Lace*: 28 florins (\$11.20). H. de G. 11. Some have conjectured this to be the *Lace Maker* of the Louvre. It could be the one in the Mellon Collection, Washington.

(At this point the catalogue begins to list paintings by Emanuel de Witte, Terborch, Netscher, Jacob van Loo and others; it resumes with the list of works by Vermeer as follows:)

31 De Stad Delft in perspectief, te sien van de Zuyd-zy,
door J. vander Meer van Delft 200-0

31. *A View of Delft from the South*: 200 florins (\$80). H. de G. 48. Mauritshuis, The Hague.

32 Een Gesicht van een Huys staende in Delft, door den-
zelven 72-10

32. *A View of a House in Delft*: 72½ florins (\$29). H. de G. 47. Rijks Museum (formerly in Six Collection, Amsterdam).

33 Een Gesicht van eenige Huysen van dito 48-0

33. *A View of Some Houses*: 48 florins (\$19.20). H. de G. 49. Undiscovered.

For some reason unknown, probably a typographical error, there is no No. 34 in the Catalogue.

35 Een Schryvende Juffrouw heel goet van denzelven 63-0
35. *A Lady Writing*: "very well painted," 63 florins (\$25.20). H. de G. 35. Possibly in the Beit Collection, London, or it could be H. de G. 36, in the Morgan Collection, New York.

36 Een Paleerende dito, seer fraey van dito 30-0
36. *A Lady Adorning Herself*: 30 florins (\$12). H. de G. 20. Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin.

37 En speelende Juffrouw op de Clavecimbael van dito 42-10
37. *A Lady Playing a Spinnet*: 42 florins (\$16.80). H. de G. 23, 24 or 25. National Gallery, if 23 or 25; if 24, Beit Collection.

38 Een Tronie in Antique Klederen, ongemeen konstig 36-0
38. *A Portrait in an Antique Costume*: "painted in an unusual and skilful manner," 36 florins (\$14.40). H. de G. 44. Generally identified as *Portrait of a Young Girl*, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

39 Nog een dito Vermeer 17-0
39. *A like picture*, also by Vermeer: 17 florins (\$6.80). Believed by some authorities to be the one in the Arenberg Collection, Brussels.

40 Een weerga van denzelven 17-0
40. *A similar picture*, by him: 17 florins (\$6.80). By some

thought to be *The Smiling Girl*, Mellon Collection, Washington.

COMMENTS ON PAINTINGS OF THE 1696 LIST AND
OTHERS THAT HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO VERMEER

Several interesting circumstances that concern Vermeer's standing in the Netherlands of his own day emerge from study of the accompanying pages of the Hoet Catalogue which contain 133 items comprising 150 pictures. At this sale, twenty-one years after his death, his paintings significantly headed a list in which he was in, certainly, very distinguished company. Of nine pictures which brought prices in excess of one hundred florins, three were by Vermeer and two of these three — *A View of Delft* and the *Milkwoman* — were the highest priced at the sale. The average price of the Vermeers was more than seventy florins and these were the only pictures in the sale which were in any way specially described.

Comparison of the prices of the Vermeer paintings with those of works attributed to celebrated Italian, German and French masters shows that the latter must have been less highly esteemed in Holland than was the "Sphinx of Delft." Thus three portraits, listed as by Tintoretto, were sold together for twenty-four florins; a *Venus and Adonis*, ascribed to Titian, brought only twenty-two florins; a Holbein portrait was auctioned at twenty-six florins; three Poussins, together, for forty-six florins and another Poussin trio for sixty-four florins. While the Netherlanders who attended this sale evinced, in general, a higher regard for their own national painters than for foreigners, some of the prices at which works by Dutch contemporaries of Vermeer were sold seem surprisingly low. A Rembrandt portrait brought only seven and one-half florins; a work

by Fabritius, his pupil and possibly Vermeer's master, was thought worth twenty florins, but one by Leonard Bramer, also thought by some to have taught Vermeer, brought only two and a quarter florins. Several of the contemporary Holland painters, on the other hand, were represented by items for which collectors paid more than one hundred florins, as Jan Steen, d'Hondekoeter and van Loo. It is readily concluded from study of the complete list, here perhaps for the first time since its original publication made easily available to the student of Dutch painting, that in 1696 Vermeer, represented at this sale by more pictures than any other painter, was not yet a victim of the oblivion which almost obliterated his name and fame a little later. It still appears anomalous that Houbraken, publishing his book on Dutch painters only twenty-three years later, in this same city of Amsterdam, failed even to mention Jan Vermeer of Delft.

The association in the Catalogue of the names of Delft painters who were contemporary with Vermeer adds to the evidence of his high standing among them. Works by Leonard Bramer, Fabritius, Terborch, De Wit, Netscher, Jan Steen and others were in the sale; none of these left in the record any such proof of national popularity as is afforded by the number, position in the list and valuations of the Vermeers.

Discoveries of paintings which some one would like to attribute to Vermeer of Delft are announced from time to time. Such "finds" were naturally quite frequently heralded in the years between the end of the World War and the oncoming of the depression of 1929, for in that era many works of art ascribed to celebrated old masters were sold to American men of wealth at fabulously high prices. Because of his vogue among collectors the market value of a work that confidently could

be attributed to Vermeer became tremendous — a circumstance which naturally intensified the search for paintings that might by any authority be given to Vermeer.







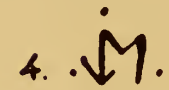



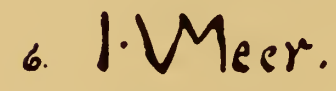
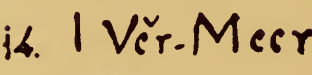




It would be difficult, and hardly worth while, to describe in detail all the paintings which collectors and art dealers, sometimes after authentication by an "authority," have declared to be by Vermeer, but which have seemed, upon later and perhaps more disinterested examination, to be the work of lesser or unknown artists. This situation will presumably continue. It is well for those who appreciate Vermeer's work for its intrinsic worth to be slow to accept new attributions, however cleverly supported, since all the trustworthy evidence indicates that the number of paintings from Vermeer's hand could not have been large. "Discoveries," for that reason if for no other, must face a presumption of reasonable doubt, which can be resolved only by very strong evidence in their favor, documentary or internal, or preferably both.

In the chapter to follow, paintings definitely known or generally and without question accepted as the work of Jan Vermeer of Delft are given, with detailed descriptions of their content, and such analysis and comment as have seemed important to an artist critic; and in addition other paintings are described the absolute certainty of the attribution of which to Vermeer can be challenged as at least doubtful.

Vermeer's supreme artistic achievements comprise a period of little more than ten years, if one accepts the tentative chronology of his works proposed by Dr. W. R. Valentiner in his *Pantheon*, October, 1932, article: "Vermeer and the Masters of Dutch Genre Painting." This generalization is apparently supported by a statement attributed to Vermeer's wife, that the artist painted but little during his last years.

This chronology discards the principle of "stylistic con-

sonances," from which other writers have reasoned, and builds itself upon "the help of dated or datable pictures painted by artists who were subject to Vermeer's influence." Several of the datings urged by Dr. Valentiner appear in the discussions of individual works, to follow.

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| 7.  | 15.  |
| 8.  | 16.  |

SIGNATURES TO SOME OF VERMEER'S
PAINTINGS

1. *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* (Edinburgh);
 2. *Girl Reading a Letter* (Dresden); 3. *The Courtesan*
 (Dresden); 4. *View of Delft* (The Hague); 5. *Little
 Street in Delft* (Amsterdam); 6. *A Girl Asleep* (Metro-
 politan Museum); 7. *The Coquette* (Brunswick); 8. *The
 Pearl Necklace* (Berlin); 9. *The Lace Maker* (Louvre);
 10. *Young Lady at the Virginals* (National Gallery, Lon-
 don); 11. *Head of a Young Girl* (The Hague); 12. *Por-
 trait of a Young Girl* (Arenberg Collection, Brussels);
 13. *The Astronomer* (Frankfort); 14. *The Artist's Stu-
 dio* (Vienna); 15. *A Young Lady Seated at the Spinnet*
 (National Gallery, London); 16. *The Love Letter* (Am-
 sterdam).

(Reproduced from *Oud-Holland*, 1920)

II · *A Catalogue Raisonné of Known Works of Jan Vermeer of Delft and of Certain Other Paintings Sometimes Attributed to Him*

A YOUNG WOMAN OPENING A CASEMENT
also called *A Young Woman with a Water Jug*
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

PLATE I

A YOUNG WOMAN, with white kerchief and large collar over a yellow jacket with blue trimming and a blue skirt, stands near a casement window, which she opens with the right hand. Her left hand holds a brass pitcher on a salver, the latter resting on a table that is covered with a variegated rug. The wall is of the grey tone which Vermeer often painted and on it, to the woman's left, is a tawny map. A lion-headed chair is behind the table, and a yellow jewel box is at the right of the table.

Canvas, 18 inches by 16 inches.

This painting formerly belonged to the seventh Viscount Powerscourt. It was bought from Lord Powerscourt by Bourgeois Frères, Paris dealers. It was purchased through Pillet, a Paris dealer, in 1887, by Henry G. Marquand of New York, and in 1888 given by him to the Metropolitan Museum. Mr. Marquand was one of the original committee of fifty which in 1869 began the movement that resulted in the establishment of the Metropolitan Museum. At the time of his gift of this picture he had been treasurer of the museum since 1882, and in 1889 he began his service as president which terminated only with his death in 1902.

The seventh Viscount Powerscourt (1836-1904), of Powerscourt Castle, Enniskerry, County Wicklow, not many miles south of Dublin, Ireland, succeeded to his historic title in 1844. He was an ardent collector of works of art, and described some of his adventures in collecting in his book "A Description and History of Powerscourt" (1903), which gives details of the furnishings of the several rooms of this great house, one of the show places of eastern Ireland. Lord Powerscourt was one of the Governors of the National Gallery of Ireland from the date of its opening, February 1, 1864, soon after which time, in company with Henry Doyle, its second director, he made a tour of Holland and Belgium in search of paintings. He describes gleefully, among other things, how in Holland they succeeded in buying for their Gallery a Rembrandt, after keen competition with an American collector. In addition to the Vermeer, the Powerscourt Collection has contained other important old masters, and is today the home of paintings by Miereveld, Ruysdael, Cuyp, C. Jansens, Mytens and others — Dutch, Flemish, Italian and English — particularly one of the tomb of William the Silent in Delft by Emanuel de Witte, who was associated with Vermeer in the Guild of St. Luke.

In view of Lord Powerscourt's ownership of one of the most beautiful Vermeers, it is interesting to note what he had to say about Vermeer in an address on Art which he delivered at the twenty-fifth annual congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, which was held in October, 1881, in Dublin. This was only fifteen years after the publication of M. Thoré's articles on Vermeer in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* and it was two years before M. Henry Havard published his articles on Vermeer in the same periodical. Lord Powerscourt may therefore be said to have been one of the first to be impressed with the greatness of Vermeer and

his remarks represent what can be called a fairly advanced degree of appreciation, however conservative it may appear in our present view.

Speaking of the Dutch painters, Lord Powerscourt says: "I cannot leave Holland without a word with regard to one of the rarest and greatest masters of the Dutch school, who is well called in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, from the little that is known of him, 'The Sphinx.' I mean Jan van der Meer, of Delft. In the Hague Museum may be seen the splendid picture of his native town, glowing with sunset light, and a few of his works may be found at Dresden, Paris, and in some private collections in England. But he is so remarkable and original an artist, and his manner of painting is so peculiar to himself, that it is curious how his talent appears to have remained almost unknown out of Holland until quite recently. The *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* had several articles on him some years since, and they gave him the name I have mentioned, on account of his being a riddle, in that he seems to have done so little, and yet that little is of such superlative merit. It does not seem to be known whether he died young, which is probable, but at any rate his name has not been recognized in the same category as Metsu or Jan Steen; and yet his work, in the few examples which are extant, might rank with these, and he had a method of treatment of light and shade, and also of colour, which is quite unmatched in its own peculiarities of style.

"Any one who knows his pictures can never forget the truth and force of his colouring, and the delicate and beautiful effects in his works, especially his way of depicting the effect of light through bluish window-glass, which seems to be the principal aim in many of his pictures, and which I do not remember to have seen so successfully rendered by any other painter."

The history of the ownership of *A Young Woman Opening*

a *Casement* is still in large measure, undetermined, but the interesting probability that it was long owned in Ireland is made evident in letters from the eighth Viscount Powerscourt dated January 18 and February 24, 1936.

In the earlier letter, Lord Powerscourt says:

"This picture was undoubtedly in my father's collection, although I believe that he sold it about the time of my birth, 1880.

"I have searched all his records, and can find no trace of his having *bought* it, so presumably it must have been acquired by his father, or even before that; as there was quite an important collection of pictures here, in the house, before my father succeeded to the property."

In his second letter, Lord Powerscourt writes: "I am sorry to say that there is no list or record of pictures that existed before my father's time. After my grandfather died my grandmother married Lord Castlereagh, who afterwards became Marquis of Londonderry. They chose Powerscourt as their home, and during this period they added a large quantity of works of art to the establishment. We have no means of judging which were attributable to this regime, which terminated many years before my father's marriage about 1864. But it is probable that the Vermeer picture was bought by Lord Castlereagh during the time of his residence at Powerscourt, as all the really fine works of art in the house, prior to those added by my father, would appear to date from that time."

This is one of Vermeer's most skilful performances. It is free from falterings or weak passages. Its colour scheme resolves itself into blues and yellows, interspersed with a certain quantity of grey, — such an arrangement as hardly anyone but Vermeer had conceived of in his day. The pronounced bluish tonality is

probably due to a blue underpainting. This tonal quality, incidentally, is popular with amateurs of Vermeer.

Mr. E. V. Lucas, in his "Vermeer of Delft," 1921, says of this picture: "The beauty of the Marquand example — The Woman with the Water Jug — is such as to dim the memory of everything else [in the museum]. This picture is by far the most lovely thing I saw in America and the most magical. Where other artists counterfeit light Vermeer kindles it, and never with more radiance than here. The work contains such a mastery of the problems of illumination and shadow — apart altogether from sheer drawing — as must make many an artist go home and burn his brushes, and no other of Vermeer's pictures is so suffused with his marvellous blue. The jug and basin, both of polished brass, are miraculous, nothing less."



A GIRL ASLEEP

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

PLATE 11

Leaning her head upon her right hand a young woman has fallen asleep as she sits at a table, well to the left of the picture. She wears a pointed black cap and a brown bodice with white collar over which is thrown a white kerchief. Her left hand rests limply on the table. The latter is covered with a crumpled rug. On it are a dish of fruit, a cloth and the little white jug which Vermeer so often painted. In the upper left corner, on the wall, is a portion of a picture, which in part resembles the picture of Cupid in the *Lady at the Virginals*, (National Gallery, London). Towards the right is a door opening into a room in which are seen a table and a picture. This glimpse into another room is an unusual detail — the only one of its kind noted

in a Vermeer, though de Hooch commonly developed such perspectives. Near the door jamb, in the upper right, part of a map is seen. The upper portion of a lion-headed chair fills the foreground, lower right.

Signed to the left, above the girl's head, "J V Meer" (the V and M intertwined).

Canvas, 34 9/16 inches by 30 1/8 inches.

Probably the *Drunken Maid Servant Asleep behind a Table*, No. 8 in the 1696 sale. (It may be noted in passing that M. Thoré supposed he had discovered the 1696 picture of this subject in a work which came into his possession, and which later was acquired by the Widener Collection; this is no longer believed to be by Vermeer but is definitely assigned to Esaias Boursse.)

A Girl Asleep was in the collection of John Waterloo Wilson, Paris, 1881. It belonged to the Paris art dealer, M. Sedelmeyer, 1898. It was in the collection of the late Rodolphe Kann, Paris. Purchased by Duveen Brothers, London, 1907, and sold by them to Benjamin Altman, New York, 1908. Bequest of Benjamin Altman to the Metropolitan Museum, 1913.

This at first sight is a somewhat disappointing picture, its tonality heavy and hot and the painting more heavy-handed than was Vermeer's best work. Some painters who have examined it do not think it a Vermeer at all. Yet, from internal evidence, it must be either a Vermeer or someone's imitation of a Vermeer; and it is unlikely that a plagiarist would have selected a scheme of composition, including the opening of a door into another room, which was unusual with Vermeer. The pigment of the canvas is apparently old; until comparatively recently no one had a compelling motive to attempt a forgery of this sort. Several of the Vermeer stigmata, furthermore, are

observable: the lion-headed chair, the white jug, the Cupid picture, the crumpled oriental rug. It is a canvas the time of which one is inclined to place before the conversation pieces and the portraits, but after such works as the *Courtesan*, the *Toilette of Diana*, *Mary and Martha*, the *Maid-servant Pouring out Milk*, the *View of Delft* and the *Little Street in Delft*, which, from their manner, are believed to be early. The heavy technique and hot colour of *A Girl Asleep* suggest that the artist may have been experimenting towards a new series of conversation pieces.

In its details *A Girl Asleep* presents many things, good and bad, which are instructive. The whitish wall of the front room has gradations that are very beautiful — indeed quite marvellous. Similarly of the wall in the back room. The jug, after the style of Vermeer's still life, is very good, though the half lights are too hot. The fruit-dish is exquisitely painted, but the fruit not so well. The cloth is bad, and the glass looks like lace. The fringe of the rug, quite at the outside of the picture, is made with singular felicity, and the whole rug is beautifully done. The planes of the head are carefully observed, the nose is well painted, the mouth is excellently made, but, unfortunately, the high lights are wrong, the one on the cheek, in particular, being obviously too high. The hand is rather good.

This painting as a whole is richer in tone — heavier and "fatter," as artists phrase it, in paint quality — than the generality of Vermeer's works. It seems to have been overcleaned.



A LADY WITH A LUTE

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

PLATE 12

Holding a lute a young woman sits at a table with blue striped cover on which are two music books. Her head is turned some-

what to the left. She wears a yellow jacket trimmed with ermine. Before the table is a chair on which some blackish-blue drapery is thrown. Further back, against the wall, is another chair, and above this hangs a map. The light is from a blue-curtained window, at the left.

Signed on the wall beneath the table: "Meer."

Canvas, 20¼ inches by 18 inches.

Possibly in the 1696 sale; in an English collection; in the collection of Collis P. Huntington, who, in 1897, bequeathed it with the rest of his collection of paintings, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, subject to a life interest of his widow and children; Mrs. Huntington died in 1924 and the surviving son, Archer M. Huntington, waived his right and transferred the collection to the Metropolitan in 1925.

From its pattern and the manner in which the window is arranged this painting seems to be about contemporary with the Berlin *Pearl Necklace*, the Metropolitan *Young Woman Opening a Casement* and the National Gallery *Lady at the Virginals*. Its design is excellent, and especially in respect of the spacing of its objects. The figure is somewhat closer to the window than was Vermeer's wont, this giving more space on the further side, which is interestingly treated.

A peculiarity of the design is that the end of the map stick almost touches the woman's head. This might seem to violate an axiom of some modern designers who tell students and other beginners that two marked forms in different planes of a composition should either overlap or be rather widely separated. Vermeer has here committed very successfully what is sometimes called a fault of arrangement.

This alleged dissonance of design, which Vermeer resolved

so agreeably, may be comparable with a prejudice which some musicians have against consecutive fifths.



ALLEGORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

PLATE 13

The title of this more or less allegorical painting was suggested by its several biblical accessories. Before a table on which are an open Bible, a crucifix and a chalice sits a woman, a little to the right of the centre. Her head is turned in three-quarters, with the eyes looking upward. Her left arm leans on the table to her left, while her right hand lightly touches her breast. The right foot rests on a large globe. The woman wears a bluish bodice with white silk skirt. The table cover is of white silk. To the rear is a large picture of the Crucifixion, while behind the crucifix is a piece of stamped leather. This picture of the Crucifixion is, in the opinion of Mr. Eduard Plietzsch, a free copy of a well-known picture of the Crucifixion by Jacob Jordaens, now at Antwerp. A tapestry curtain hangs across the upper left hand, reaching nearly to the bottom where it meets a chair with blue cushion. On the floor, which is of blue and white squares, lies a snake, its head crushed and bleeding beneath a weight of veined marble. Near by is the apple of Paradise. Above the woman, somewhat to her right, hangs a crystal ball.

Canvas, 45 inches by 35 inches.

Sold at the Herman van Swoll Collection Sale, Amsterdam, April 22, 1699, No. 25, 400 florins (\$160), as a "Representation of the New Testament"; same place, July 13, 1718, No. 8,

500 florins (\$200); Amsterdam sale, April 19, 1735, No. 11, 53 florins (\$21.20); David Jetwaart Collection Sale, Amsterdam, April 22, 1749, No. 152, 70 florins (\$28), stated, in the entry in the Hoet Catalogue (Vol. II, p. 248), to be by "the Delft van der Meer, as good as Eglon vander Neer." Rediscovered in Berlin in an antique shop by Dr. A. Bredius to whom it is said to have been sold as an Eglon van der Neer by Wachtler, a dealer, for 700 marks. While the picture was in his possession, Dr. Bredius lent it for many years for exhibition at the Royal Gallery of Paintings, the Mauritshuis, The Hague, of which he was sometime the Director. It was bought from Dr. Bredius by Francis Kleinberger, dealer, and by him sold in 1928, to the late Colonel Michael Friedsam, New York, by bequest from whom in 1931 it passed into the ownership of the Metropolitan Museum. See article on "The Friedsam Collection of Paintings," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, November, 1932.

In this work Vermeer passed from the sublime into the ridiculous. It is technically one of his most accomplished paintings. There are many beautiful passages in it. The weak point, of course, is the woman's figure. When Vermeer painted a young woman standing by a window he was wonderful. When he tried his hand at something quasi-allegorical, he was, to put it mildly, less remarkable. The effort to inject a religious content into his design seems to have paralyzed his energies and inhibited his good taste. Not only is the woman stupidly posed, not only is the expression of her face absurd, but she is not even a well-made figure.

The accessories, on the other hand, are extremely well done. The invention of the globe as a footstool is about as puerile as

anything in allegorical art; yet, it is delightfully painted. The crucifix is a marvel of skill and finish. The picture of the Crucifixion is done with consummate art, in that it stays back and still permits one to discern its details.

The well-handled curtain to the left makes it appear probable that the picture was painted at about the period of the *Studio*. The compositional devices are much the same in both works: in each is the same curtain; in both pictures a chair is placed in similar relation to the whole arrangement; there are the same rafters in the ceiling, and the same expedient of a hanging object to break the straightness of the beam lines. The picture on the wall in one painting and the map in the other are placed similarly and for essentially the same compositional purpose.

The New Testament reveals sharply in one canvas Vermeer's astounding merits and some of his weaknesses as a painter. Things in it were painted as no one but he ever has painted, and yet, apparently, he let it go out of his studio without trying to modify or conceal the awkwardness of his ridiculous female.

The subject matter of this allegorical painting, incidentally, may not have seemed absurd to pious owners of a book published in 1644 called *Iconologie of Uytbeeldinghe des Verstants*, a translation by Dirck Pietersz Pers after Cesare Ripa, in which iconography the figure of "Faith" is called: "A woman seated with a chalice in her right hand, her left hand on a book and her feet on the earth; on the ground a serpent crushed by an angular stone, and an apple representing sin; behind the woman a crown of thorns suspended on a nail; in the background a picture of the Sacrifice of Abraham."

LADY WRITING

Morgan Collection, New York

PLATE 14

A gentlewoman writes at a table. She leans forward with her head turned slightly towards the spectator. She wears a yellow morning jacket trimmed with ermine; her chair is ornamented with gilt lions' heads. The accessories of the table are an ink-stand, some pearls and a casket. On the wall is a map, somewhat obscured in the half light. The picture is lighted from a window at the extreme left.

Canvas, 18½ inches by 14½ inches.

This painting may have been in the Amsterdam sale, 1696, No. 35. It also appeared, probably, in the Dr. Luchtman's Sale, Rotterdam, 1816; the J. Kamermans Sale, probably, Rotterdam, 1825; the H. Reydon Sale, Amsterdam, 1827, and the Comte F. de Robiano Sale, Brussels, 1837.

This is one of the least interesting of Vermeer's paintings, though it has clever bits, as notably the lions' heads. In its technique there is some resemblance to the style of Caspar Netscher (1639-1684), suggesting that the work may have been painted towards the end of Vermeer's life when Netscher had returned to Holland after his residence in France and was influencing other Netherland painters towards a French manner. The blackish tone, unusual in a Vermeer, is rather dismal. The background seems to show through the head, and apparently the whole picture was painted in a thin, grey manner not unlike that of Gerard de Lairese (1641-1711) and his contemporaries who frankly imitated the contemporary French school. These Francophile painters of Holland had, in common with Largil-

lière, Rigaud and Mignard, a liking for distinct, well-understood technique, for clear bright colours and clean surfaces — qualities which Vermeer, too, shared with them. Such affinity for the art of the Latin nations, in so far forth as Vermeer had it, might have been stimulated, in the first instance, by Leonard Bramer, by some supposed to have been one of his teachers. Vermeer is known to have owned a *Crucifixion*, apparently, as already noted, by Jordaens, or at least a copy after him, and the *Gipsy Woman*, now at Antwerp, by Dirck van Baburen, an academic painter who worked in Italy. The Cupid which appears in three of his works seems to have been a painting of the Italian or Italianate mode.



GIRL INTERRUPTED AT HER MUSIC

sometimes called *The Singing Lesson*, *The Music Lesson* or
A Gentleman and a Young Lady

Frick Collection, New York

PLATE 15

A man leans over a young woman in order to take, or give, a paper, possibly connected with the book of music on the table. The girl's head is turned away from him and towards the spectator. Beneath her white kerchief she wears a red jacket and a blue skirt. On the covered table, beside the sheet of music, are a mandolin and the white jug which is in several of Vermeer's pictures, together with a glass of red wine. Before the table, to the left, making a significant detail, is a lion-headed chair, with blue cushion. Two other chairs of the same design appear, in one of which the lady sits. The light is from a leaded window to the left; on the wall, near by, is a bird cage which some have thought painted by another hand.

Dimly adumbrated in the picture behind the two figures is discerned the Cupid which is also in the *Lady at the Virginals*, National Gallery, and in part in the *Girl Asleep*, Metropolitan Museum. This picture of a Cupid became visible when the work was cleaned. Its place was formerly occupied by a violin and a bow, noticed in the catalogue of the Smeth van Alphen Sale of 1810.

Canvas, 15¼ inches by 17¼ inches.

This may be the painting of the 1696 sale catalogued as *A Gentleman and a Lady Making Music*. Sold at the P. de Smeth van Alphen Sale, Amsterdam, August 1, 1810, No. 57, 610 florins (\$244); H. Croese Sale, Amsterdam, September 18, 1811, No. 45, 399 florins; C. S. Roos Sale, Amsterdam, August 28, 1820, No. 64, 330 florins, (Brondgeest); Woodburn Collection; Gibson Collection; collection of Lewis Fry, Clifton, Bristol, England, 1900; Lawrie and Company, London; acquired by Henry Clay Frick in 1901; Frick Collection, New York.

The accessories of this interior are treated in a masterly way. The painting of the figures is less satisfactory. Observing, indeed, the folds of the young woman's gown one wonders if they have not been repainted by a clumsier hand than Vermeer's. The girl's face is pretty but by no means well constructed. This constructive weakness might be thought not to matter much, since Vermeer did not work constructively, but, unfortunately, even the light and shade, in which he usually excelled, are here not very good. The head and kerchief may be compared, for notation of differences of quality, with the head of the Metropolitan Museum's *Young Woman Opening a Casement*. The weakly drawn wrist and hand and the slimy waist in this work make one understand how Vermeer's paintings

were sometimes attributed to Jan Steen. The man's draperies, in the picture, for some reason, are more logically constructed than the woman's, but even they do not give a sense of the light sliding across them as Vermeer caused it to do when drapery stood still for him.

These defects of an admirably designed painting show markedly where Vermeer's strength lay and wherein he was not so able. In the instance of this picture, he presumably could not have his models for long enough sittings, or he found difficulty in making them hold the pose. He painted at other times, as when he did the *Head of a Girl*, the Hague Museum, some of the finest heads ever modeled. If in completing the figures in this work he could have treated them like bits of still life they might have been better done.

Vermeer seemed at times to lose his courage in painting the living model, and to approach his problems of creating a possible figure in a mood different from that spirit of objectivity which made him a great painter.



THE SOLDIER AND THE LAUGHING GIRL
sometimes called *Officer and Laughing Girl*

Frick Collection, New York

PLATE 16

A soldier, his right arm akimbo, with the hand resting on his thigh, sits in "lost profile" with his back slightly turned to the spectator. He looks at a laughing girl, seated across a small table in a lion-headed chair. The girl's head is in three-quarters; glancing towards the soldier she holds a wineglass in her right hand, the left resting on the table. Her bodice is of black and yellow; she has a white coif. The soldier's hat is black with a red ribbon, and his baldric is of red with a bandolier.

The casement of a leaded window, to the left, is partly open to admit the light; above is a curtain. A map of Holland and West Friesland is behind the girl's head and high up in the picture. See Plate 17.

Not signed.

Canvas, 20 inches by 18 inches.

This is No. 11, Amsterdam sale, 1696, 44 florins; bought at a London sale, for £246. 15s., as a Pieter de Hooch by Léopold Double, Paris, who owned it in 1866, as chronicled by M. Thoré; sold from the Léopold Double Collection, Paris, May 30, 1881; in the Demidoff Collection, San Donato, near Florence; collection of Mrs. Samuel S. Joseph, London, until acquired by Henry Clay Frick in 1911; Frick Collection, New York.

This is not one of Vermeer's best paintings, though it contains characteristic passages. The blacks are exaggerated and, in general, the shadows are unpleasantly dark. The colour values are not impeccable.

The composition is daring and original. The large size of the soldier's head in relation to the girl's shows how close to his subjects Vermeer was accustomed to sit. The lion-headed chairs and one of the maps which he was fond of painting are present. The girl wears a bodice which he often rendered, and her coif is one which he has made familiar. The map is rendered in that astonishing detail of which Vermeer was capable. Since, nevertheless, it conveys too much sense of the local tone of the blacks, it is not so good as is the map in the *Studio* in which the light slides over the surface quite wonderfully. The perspective of the window offers proof of a fact, previously adverted to, that Vermeer sat while he painted.

The map on the wall is a Blaeu map, concerning which Mr. Louis A. Holman, in his "Old Maps and Their Makers," Boston, 1926, writes: "The Blaeu maps, taken by and large, are probably the most beautiful product of the art of cartography; in general plan, in harmonious colour, in free artistic lettering, in well-drawn cartouches, in ships and in whales, there is a nice harmony, a delicate craftsmanship, that would be hard, indeed, to duplicate. It is an interesting fact that these Blaeu maps influenced such artists as Vermeer. . . . In [several] of his paintings maps are used as an integral part of the composition. In some of them, as in *The Soldier and the Laughing Girl*, he has painted a detail of the map so faithfully that the original is easily recognized. Other artists — Metsu, de Hooch, Steen, Terborch, to mention only one group — also used maps in their paintings. Some of the old maps have wide borders or frames filled with pictures of cities and of men and women in gay costume. Speed [John, English cartographer] seems to have set this fashion. Blaeu and others quickly copied it.

"Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638) and his two sons, Jan and Cornelis, had before 1655 published about 400 maps. Their first was in 1606. The third generation carried on the business until 1672, when fire destroyed their publishing house in Amsterdam, with most of the map plates."



A LADY AND A MAID-SERVANT

Frick Collection, New York

PLATE 18

A seated young woman, turned in "lost profile." She looks towards a smiling maid-servant who hands her a letter. She wears a lemon-yellow jacket trimmed with ermine and she has pearls

in her hair, around her neck and a large pendant at the ear. The maid is dressed in a dull grey bodice and skirt. On the table, which is covered by a somewhat rumpled blue cloth, are a glass inkstand, a drinking glass and a casket. The background is dark.

A much enlarged photograph of a small section of the upper left corner of the box on which the maid's right arm is resting discloses what appear to be faint and incomplete outlines of the letters "V e r m."

Canvas, 35 inches by 30 inches.

Possibly No. 7 of the 1696 sale, 70 florins; Josua van Belle Collection Sale, Rotterdam, 1730, No. 92, 155 florins; Burgo-master Hendrik van Slingelandt Collection Sale, The Hague, 1770; Blondel de Gagny Collection Sale, Paris, December 10-24, 1776, No. 72, (as Terborch, 3902 francs, with *Une Femme assise, lisant une Lettre*, to Lengliev, for Poullain); Poullain Collection Sale, Paris, March 15, 1780, No. 40, 4550 francs; Le Brun Collection Sale, Paris, 1809, 600 francs; Paillet Collection Sale, Paris, 1818, 460 francs; Duchesse de Berri Collection Sale, Paris, April 4, 1837, No. 76, 405 francs; Dufour, Marseilles; E. Secrétan Collection Sale, Sedelmeyer Galleries, Paris, July 1, 1889, No. 139, Sedelmeyer Galleries, 75000 francs; A. Paulovtsoff, St. Petersburg; sold by him to the London dealers, Lawrie and Company; Sulley and Company, London, in 1905; James Simon, Berlin; Duveen Brothers, 1919; purchased 1919, by Henry Clay Frick; Frick Collection, New York.

This painting lacks some of the Vermeer earmarks. The table covering is different from that in several pictures definitely given to Vermeer; the woman's morning sacque is of

a pattern not noticed in any of his other works; the hair is not dressed as one would expect. The background seems apart from the composition. This, indeed, is about the only conversation piece ascribed to Vermeer in which the structural lines and the wall surfaces do not continue and improve upon the design.

The painting, on the other hand, appears to be signed. A forgery of Vermeer's signature would hardly have been worth while until comparatively recently.

The work, furthermore, is, in many ways, so admirable that it is difficult to think of anyone except Vermeer who could have made it.



THE GEOGRAPHER
also called *The Astronomer*

Collection of E. John Magnin, New York

PLATE 19

A young man sits, left in the picture, facing to the right. He has a loose cap and wears a grey gown faced with leopard skin. Against a globe leans a large open book. On a table, covered by a rug, are a compass and other instruments. The background is considerably concealed by a green curtain. A quadrant hangs from the ceiling. The rapt expression of concentration with which the young man looks at the spot on the globe where his left hand rests, while his right hand holds an open book, possibly descriptive of the place he is studying, is the picture's central motive.

Signed and dated 1665.

Panel, 19 inches by 14½ inches.

Three pictures which portray the single figure of a man who might be called an astronomer, or a geographer, or a mathematician, or a scientist of a similar kind, are attributed to Jan Vermeer of Delft: one owned by E. John Magnin, New York, one in the Rothschild Collection, Paris, and one in the Städel Art Institute, Frankfurt. In the records of certain picture sales during the eighteenth century, mention is made of "two astronomers," — the word in the Hoet Catalogue is "astrologist." The point to be noted is not, however, the word translated "astronomer" but, rather, the fact that the sales records of *two* pictures have been taken, in several publications on Vermeer of Delft, as authority for the attribution to him of each one of these *three* pictures. It seems reasonable to say that a set of facts concerning *two* pictures cannot very well be considered to apply to *three*, and in the absence of identifying details, such particularly as those of height and width, cannot with assurance be attached to any two of the three, to the prejudice of the third. The Hoet Catalogue gives no dimensions; it refers merely, in the language of the dealers from whose sales catalogues it was compiled, to the skill and excellence of the workmanship. There is satisfactory authority for the acceptance of each of these three pictures as the work of Jan Vermeer of Delft. Which two of the three were actually sold in the successive eighteenth century sales is at present (1936) still not definitely determined.

It is probable that down through the Jan Danser Nijman Sale of 1797, the sales record of only two of these three pictures exists. The supposition that Nijman had acquired a third painting of this subject is rendered doubtful by curious errors of compilation of an earlier day, in which the identical Nijman number — 167 — is given to both the Magnin and the Rothschild pictures, and in which practically the identical price (132 and 133 florins) is given to both numbers 167 and 168, although the former number, 167, is stated in the history of the Roths-

child *Astronomer* to have been sold by Nijman for 270 florins. In the face of such a comedy of errors it is reasonable only to prefix the word "possibly" to each of the early histories credited to these pictures.

With this in mind, the history of the sales of the *Geographer* may be set forth as follows:

Sales: Possibly at Rotterdam, April 27, 1713, at which two pictures, numbered 10 and 11, each with the same subject, were sold for 300 florins; possibly at the Hendrik Sorgh Sale, Amsterdam, March 28, 1720, at which two paintings were sold together for 160 florins: No. 3, "an astrologist," as stated in the Hoet Catalogue, Vol. I, p. 242, "of Vermeer of Delft, extra choice," and No. 4, "a like picture of the same [artist], not inferior"; possibly at the Govert Looten Sale, Amsterdam, March 31, 1729, Item No. 6 (Hoet Catalogue, Vol. I, p. 333), comprising "two astrologists, of the Delft van der Meer, excellently and cleverly painted," the two together for 104 florins; possibly also Jacob Crammer Simonz, Amsterdam, November 25, 1778, No. 20, 172 florins (Wubbels); possibly also Lebrun, Paris, 1792; possibly Jan Danser Nijman, Amsterdam, August 16, 1797.

In the Collection of Lord ———; Isaac Péreire, Paris, 1872, 4000 francs; Edouard Kums, Antwerp, May 17-18, 1898, 8500 francs; Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies, Brussels, on whose death it passed by inheritance to his son-in-law, Comte de Renesse, from whom it was acquired for joint ownership by René Gimpel, of Paris, and Edouard Jonas, New York and Paris; sold by the latter, January, 1936, to E. John Magnin, New York; Collection of E. John Magnin, New York. See *The Art News*, New York, May 16, 1931, for a reproduction in colour.

As stated above, this is one of three paintings ascribed to Vermeer, all depicting an astronomer. Some writers have conjec-

tured that Anthony van Leeuwenhoek may have been the subject of this picture, and of the two pictures called *The Astronomer*. The question of the likelihood of this possibility is discussed in connection with *The Astronomer* in the Städel Institute, Frankfort, pages 197-200.

While this painting was still in the possession of M. Péreire, it was seen by M. Thoré, who wrote (*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April, 1864): "It is dated 1665 but I have not yet been able to discover the signature if it is there."

After 1898, when it passed through public sale from the Kums Collection into that of the Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies, it was for years seen by only a few privileged persons, by none of whom was it examined critically.

When it came into Comte de Renesse's possession Dr. W. Martin, Director of the Royal Gallery of Paintings, The Hague, was permitted to study it at his leisure. Having removed the enveloping varnish he discerned the date, 1665, previously discovered, written in Arabic numerals in the centre of the right leaf of the book leaning against the globe, and a signature in handwriting in the upper left corner of the map on the wall. The capital letter V, furthermore, he found on the book held in the geographer's hand, and the capital letter M on the other book. Dr. Martin's letter, in possession of Mr. Jonas (1929), is as follows: "This picture is one of the works of Vermeer that has been the least studied, because since 1898, the date on which it passed through public sale from the Kums Collection into that of the Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies, it has been seen by but very few privileged persons, the owner having always refused to show it. Recently it went into the Collection of the Comte de Renesse (son-in-law of the Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies), where we have been able to examine it at leisure.

"After having removed the varnish, which rendered it dark,

we had the surprise to discover the genuine and certain date and signature, which are quite visible — when one knows the exact place — on the photogravure reproduction which appears in the remarkable work by M. Hofstede de Groot on ‘Vermeer and Fabritius.’ This picture bears a very distinct date, 1665, written in Arabic characters on the middle of the right leaf of the book leaning against the globe.

“In the upper left corner of the map hanging on the wall can also be seen, in the form of an inscription, four lines of handwriting. The map being disposed obliquely to the view of the observer, the painter, faithful translator of the laws of perspective, has accordingly brought closely together the downstrokes of the lettering.

“Leaving the first line, which appears to defy transcription, one can read, on the second one, a signature absolutely similar to that which is seen on the *Courtesan*, and it also recalls the monogram of the *View of Delft*. Yet, one’s attention is drawn to the fact the name is written *Mee* instead of *Meer*, leading one to suppose that the *r* has disappeared, and that the last letter was an *e*. Underneath can be seen other figures and letters, probably an indication of the date of the month and year.

“It may also be that no great care has been taken in the two capital letters which can be seen, one on the book held in the hand of the geographer and the other on the book leaning against the globe, letters which, by a very singular coincidence, may be read as *V* and *M*.

“The place of this signature should not surprise anyone. Although Vermeer seldom dated his paintings, he, on the other hand, signed twenty-two of his works, and the greater number of his signatures he placed in the middle of his pictures and often in large characters.”

(Signed) W. MARTIN

After the painting had passed into the joint possession of M. Gimpel and Mr. Jonas it was also studied by Dr. W. R. Valentiner while it was exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts. He pronounced it a characteristic and excellent work by Jan Vermeer of Delft, most harmonious as well in the carefully balanced composition as in the fine subdued colour scheme built upon shades of grey and light brown.

At Mr. Magnin's New York home (1936), this picture hangs on a living-room wall; it is perhaps the only Vermeer of authentic record not hung in a public or private art gallery but lived with by its owner in intimate daily association. This manner of hanging is a return to the original conception of the collectors of old Holland, who bought pictures, or had them painted, for their homes. Mr. Magnin, incidentally, is of old Netherland ancestry.



A YOUNG WOMAN READING

Collection of Jules S. Bache, New York

Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

PLATE 20

A young woman reading a letter sits in profile, looking to the spectator's right. Her head is placed very low in the picture, the light coming in from the right. Her hair is brushed back from the forehead and quaintly braided; a lovelock falls in front of the right ear. Over the shoulders is a white lawn handkerchief; the yellow gown has narrow black edging and white cuffs. The chair in which the woman sits is stiff, straight-backed and studded with brass-headed nails. Another similar chair stands against the wall, near her knees. A little dark seascape, framed in black, hangs on the wall and serves to de-

tach the head in extreme relief. The wall is of a pallid and muted yellow tone.

Canvas, 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches by 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Attributed to Vermeer by Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot in his "Jan Vermeer and Carel Fabritius."

Formerly in the collections of Dr. Rademaker, The Hague, and the Messrs. Wildenstein. Exhibited at the Reinhardt Galleries, New York, 1926. Bought by Jules S. Bache, 1928.

Some experts of repute have vouched for this painting. If it is by Vermeer it is not a very good example. Its best qualities are its colour scheme and the distinctive arrangement. The latter seems not entirely conclusive — not convincingly in Vermeer's manner. He often placed the head low in the picture, with a great deal of space above it, as in the Dresden *Letter*. Sometimes, again, he placed the head as most other painters would, rather near the top of his composition. This head appears to be neither. It merely has been put awkwardly low with no compensating charm of tapestry or map or whatever else might be behind it.



HEAD OF A YOUNG BOY

Collection of Jules S. Bache, New York

Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

PLATE 21

Head and shoulders of a boy, in full face, the large brown eyes turned slightly to the left, the nose somewhat large and heavy, the lips full and well-shaped. His curly dark-brown hair reaches to the shoulders. The light is from the left. He wears a white collar edged with lace; a large yellow-brown mantle is thrown

across his shoulders. The background, darker to the left than to the right, is of a neutral tone.

Canvas, 23 ½ inches by 19 ½ inches.

Formerly in the collections of Yves Perdoux and Sir Joseph Duveen, Bart. Attributed at one time to Sébastien Bourdon. Attributed to Vermeer by Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot in his "Jan Vermeer of Delft and Carel Fabritius." Listed by Emil Waldmann as questionable, in *Kunst und Künstler*, for February, 1926.

Several scholars of repute have expressed themselves as favouring the attribution of this portrait to Vermeer. Yet does it altogether suggest Vermeer? The painting of the collar is not unlike his manner; the head, on the other hand, though very ably made, does not resemble Vermeer's workmanship as much as do other heads which are less skilfully painted. The *Girl with a Flute*, Widener Collection, for instance, is not a particularly attractive picture but it reeks of Vermeer. This head does not. It looks more like the Italianate work of some French or Netherland painter trained in Italy. Vermeer's portraits were generally laid in in planes and then worked over. This head, very fluently executed, seems to have been done in a more "fused" style.



THE GIRL WITH THE RED HAT

also called *The Girl with the Red Feather*

*Collection of the A. W. Mellon Educational and
Charitable Trust, Washington*

PLATE 22

Wearing a large hat with red plumes and a vaguely shaped cloak of blue brocade, a girl is looking over her right shoul-

der. The head disengages itself from a tapestry background of bluish and dull yellow tones. The hat casts a shadow over about two-thirds of the face. The half-shut eyes, the aristocratic nose, the full, well-shaped lips are painted with singular competence. The lions' heads, seen often in Vermeer's works, appear against the hand and near the elbow.

This painting is now called *The Girl with the Red Hat*, though it is listed in several old catalogues and inventories as *Portrait of a Young Man*.

Signed with Vermeer's monogram in the upper left corner.

Canvas, 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches by 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches.

This Vermeer was in the Lafontaine Collection, Paris, whence in 1822 it passed to the ownership of General the Baron Atthalin, Colmar; bequeathed to his grandson, Laurent Atthalin; Baroness Laurent Atthalin; brought to the United States by Knoedler & Co. and by them sold to Andrew W. Mellon for a price said to be \$290,000.

The painting is unmistakably by Vermeer at his best. Some attributions made during the years of Vermeer's ever-growing vogue have seemed very doubtful; this one stands on a basis of manner and technique that could hardly be attributed to anyone else. The execution is unfaltering throughout; the technical problems, several of them difficult, have been boldly and easily solved.

One of the best bits is the painting of the mouth, as fine as that of the mouth of the famous *Girl* at The Hague. The planes of the nose are beautifully delineated, and the pearl is exquisitely made. With it all goes a colour tone richer than in some Vermeers, perhaps because the underpainting is either less discernible or "comes through" more agreeably than elsewhere.

THE SMILING GIRL

also known as *Head of a Young Girl*

*Collection of the A. W. Mellon Educational and
Charitable Trust, Washington*

PLATE 23

Painting of a smiling girl's head and shoulders. She looks over the left shoulder, her head in three-quarters. The eyes are rather wide open for a smiling face. The hair is brushed back from a high, broad forehead, and over it is a small cap or coif. The familiar pear-shaped pearl dangles from the right ear. Under a severely plain white collar is a nondescript grey-brown garment. The background is of a dark grey-green tone.

Canvas, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Formerly in the collections of Walter Kurt Rohde, Berlin, and of Duveen Brothers, London.

This painting has been the subject of surmises more entertaining than conclusive. The catalogue of the Amsterdam sale, 1696, mentions No. 38 as a "Portrait in an Antique Costume." This has plausibly been thought to be the *Head of a Young Girl*, the Mauritshuis, The Hague. No. 39 is listed as *A like picture*, also by Vermeer. Several writers have believed this to be the *Head* in the Arenberg Collection, Brussels. No. 40 is described as *A similar picture*, by him. *The Smiling Girl*, it has been asserted, is this picture.

The late Dr. Wilhelm von Bode, of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, certified the head now in the Mellon Collection as "a fairly early work of the Delft master, Vermeer." This dating is hard to understand if one believes, as do several authorities, that Vermeer's daughter, or daughters, posed for

the Hague *Head* and the Arenberg *Head*. Vermeer married in 1653 and died in 1675. If the Mellon *Head* is a daughter it should have been painted about 1670, relatively late in the artist's career.

The Mellon picture is not so good, technically, as the famous Hague *Head of a Girl*. The latter is astonishingly fine in the general light and shade of the face and in the making of the nose and mouth. In *The Smiling Girl's* favour, however, one can say that no other painter but Vermeer ever posed a head in quite that way or painted it with quite that technique.



THE LACE MAKER

*Collection of the A. W. Mellon Educational and
Charitable Trust, Washington*

PLATE 24

Her left hand holding a bobbin, a young girl, placed rather low in the picture, sits before a lace maker's frame. She may be identical with the girl in the Brunswick *Girl with the Wine Glass*. She looks over her left shoulder. Under a white lace collar she wears a yellow jacket with lace cuffs. A blue cushion, similar to that of the Louvre *Lace Maker*, lies on a table between the girl and the spectator, by her left shoulder. In front of this is a dish of silver or pewter, which appears to be the same as the one in the Metropolitan Museum picture, *Young Woman Opening a Casement*. The background is of whitish grey.

Canvas, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Formerly in the collection of Harold R. Wright, London. Exhibited at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, 1926-27.

Bought, 1928, by Andrew W. Mellon through Sir Joseph Duveen.

Attributed to Vermeer by three authorities of the State Museums, Berlin: Dr. Max J. Friedländer, director of the department of prints and engravings, the late Dr. Wilhelm von Bode, director, and Dr. Hermann Boss, curator of paintings. Dr. Eduard Plietzsch has suggested that this painting is perhaps identical with the *Woman Making Lace*, sold at auction, July 8, 1817, (Hofstede de Groot, No. 12-b), of which there is no further record.

While it hardly measures up to the very high standard set by the *Lace Maker* of the Louvre, this painting has engaging qualities of design and execution. Several of the details, notably the cushion, the dish, the pearl, the frame for lace making, are well painted. The hands are somewhat weak and the mouth not very well made. The handling lacks the crispness of the *Girl with the Red Hat*. The face is pretty but painted weakly, whereas one thinks of Vermeer's heads as generally plain but strongly painted. The still life, which is good, may be contrasted with that in the Louvre *Lace Maker*. In the latter the handling is not so loose as in this one, but is firm and almost blocky.



THE CONCERT

*Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in the Fenway
(Fenway Court), Boston*

PLATE 25

A group about a harpsichord. A young girl, seated, facing in profile to the right, plays. She wears a silk gown and has ribbons in her hair. A gentleman sits near the instrument, his back to the spectator. Standing near by, in three-quarters, to-

wards the right of the canvas and facing left, is a lady, wearing a jacket trimmed with white swansdown. She holds in her left hand a scrap of paper at which she glances while with her right hand she beats time. The man has a coat of nondescript colour, over which is stretched a bandolier; he sits in a chair upholstered in green and blue tapestry. Over the girl's head is a large landscape. The painting inside the harpsichord cover sets off the man's head, and another picture relieves the woman's head. The wall is of a violet grey. A table in the foreground, to the left, is covered with a crumpled rug, and it bears a guitar. A violoncello lies near by on the floor, which is in black and white tessellated pavement.

Canvas, 27¼ inches by 24¾ inches.

The 1931 catalogue of the Gardner Museum, by Mr. Philip Hendy, states that this painting was brought from Holland probably by Baroness van Leyden, in whose sale it appeared in Paris (Paillet et Delaroche), September 10, 1804, No. 62, fully described. It reappeared in London April 2, 1860 (Christie's, No. 49, *A Musical Party*), as part of the property of a baronet, and was bought by the dealer, Arthur Tooth, (the mark *April 2/60* is in chalk on the back of the canvas). It was bought after December, 1886, by Théophile Thoré. At his sale in Paris, December 5, 1892, Hotel Druot, *Le Concert*, No. 31, was bought by Mrs. Gardner herself for 29,000 francs. For an entertaining account of this sale, at which both the Louvre and the National Gallery were bidders for *The Concert*, see "Isabella Stewart Gardner and Fenway Court," by Morris Carter, page 134.

The Fenway Court Vermeer was painted in the artist's best period and manner. It is particularly fine in design. The background is essential to the pattern—a distinctive quality in

which Vermeer resembles no other Netherland painter. The figures are far back in the canvas, being almost against the wall. This is a peculiarity of arrangement which, among Vermeer's other works, appears only in the Windsor Castle *Music Lesson*, which may well have been painted at about the same time.

The introduction of the dark table with massed draperies, which serve as a foil to the rest of the composition, is thoroughly characteristic of Vermeer.

The most charming figure, it may be thought, is that of the young girl, playing. The other figures, per contra, are somewhat stupid. It is even possible to regret that Vermeer ever met the man who appears in this painting. The standing lady is more successful than the man, though she lacks distinction.

That *The Concert* is a key painting in fixing the chronology of Vermeer's works, is suggested by Dr. W. R. Valentiner in his article "Vermeer and the Masters of Dutch Genre Painting," *The Pantheon*, October, 1932. It apparently served as a prototype for Jan Steen's picture *The Harpsichord Lesson*, dated 1656. It therefore should be dated, according to Dr. Valentiner, among the earlier of Vermeer's works. The article adds: "The young lady at the piano in the picture in the Gardner Collection wears a bodice of the same style as the *Girl Reading a Letter* in Dresden and the girl in *The Soldier and the Laughing Girl* in the Frick Collection, both pictures which have been assigned to a comparatively early period. These two paintings and the picture in the Gardner Collection are evidently chronological neighbours; for it cannot well be assumed that Vermeer's model wore the same bodice longer than two or three years." Starting from the dating which seems to have been approximately established for *The Concert* Dr. Valentiner has produced a very plausible chronological order for most of the known Vermeers.

Dirck van Baburen's picture of *The Procuress* is seen hanging on the wall in *The Concert* and in *A Young Lady Seated at the Spinet* in the National Gallery. Mr. Wilenski on page 44 of his "Introduction to Dutch Art" calls attention to this circumstance and considers that the picture must have belonged to Vermeer and hung in his studio. "This fact," says Mr. Wilenski, "is at present the artist's main title to fame." Incidentally Mr. Wilenski notes that in the National Gallery picture the van Baburen picture is in a gold frame; in the Gardner painting, in a black frame. In the exhibition of paintings by Vermeer and other Dutch artists at the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, 1935, this work by van Baburen was shown, having been lent for the purpose by the Rijks Museum, Amsterdam.



PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Edwards, Cincinnati

Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

PLATE 26

Bust length portrait of a young woman whose dark hair, combed close to the head, is partly covered by a small cap. She has large pearl earrings. Around her shoulders is a white kerchief. The dress, of which only a narrow strip is visible, is dark.

Canvas, 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches by 7 inches.

Sold to Mr. Edwards by Herr Bottenwiesser, dealer, Berlin. Said to have been owned at one time in Norway.

Regarding the attribution of this picture to Jan Vermeer of Delft, the following diverse opinions are here set down as matters of record.

On the one hand, Dr. von Bode, of the Kaiser Friedrich

Museum, Berlin, on July 24, 1924, wrote: "An unquestionable and most characteristic and delightful work by Jan Vermeer of Delft, from his best period." And Dr. Friedländer, of the Print Cabinet of the same museum, considered that the picture "agrees entirely in style, colour and conception with this world-famous master's work, showing his cool and delightfully pearly lustre." And Dr. Hofstede de Groot, in September, 1924, wrote that he considered the painting "an authentic and characteristic work by Johannes Vermeer of Delft."

On the other hand Dr. W. R. Valentiner, Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, under date of March 30, 1930, wrote concerning this work: "This, in my opinion, while it is of the period, is surely not by Vermeer, and I believe that which has been told to me from several sides — that it was cut out of a larger composition which looked very little like Vermeer when it was complete — is most likely true." To this may be added the implied opinion of the editors of the catalogue of the "Exhibition of Dutch Art, 1450-1900," held at the Royal Academy, Burlington House, London, in 1929, in which this picture is listed merely as "attributed to Johannes Vermeer."



A WOMAN WEIGHING GOLD

sometimes called *A Woman Weighing Pearls*

Widener Collection, Elkins Park, near Philadelphia

PLATE 27

Either weighing gold or testing the weights of her scales to weigh some pearls lying near by, a lady stands close to an open window. Over a red and yellow underjacket the woman wears

a dark blue jacket trimmed with ermine. The table cover is of dark blue; the window curtain, orange yellow. On the wall is a large picture, apparently of *The Last Judgment*. The floor is in black and white tiling or marble.

Not signed. Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot, in his "Catalogue of Dutch Painters," 1907, states that it is signed and on panel. In the summer of 1910, however, as he has related in the *Burlington Magazine* in December of that year, Dr. de Groot tells how he sought out and identified the picture in the collection of the Comtesse de Ségur, sister of the late President Casimir-Périer. "Some years ago," Dr. de Groot writes, "I described the picture, guided by the Périer Sale Catalogue, then the only available source of information. In my description I made two regrettable mistakes, and should like to use this opportunity of correcting them: the picture is *not* signed and is not painted on wood, but on *canvas*."

Canvas, 16½ inches by 14 inches.

Sales: No. 1 in the sale at Amsterdam, 1696, 155 florins, including a case; Amsterdam, 1701, No. 6, 113 florins; Nieuhoff, Amsterdam, 1777, No. 116, 235 florins (van den Bogaerd); Collection of the King of Bavaria, Munich, 1826, No. 101, 800 florins; Marquis de Caraman, Paris, 1830; Casimer-Périer, London, 1848, £141. 15s.; bought in by M. Casimer-Périer, *filis*; Collection Ségur-Périer, Paris, where, as just related, it was discovered by Dr. de Groot in 1910; it subsequently passed through the hands of Messrs. P. and D. Colnaghi and Obach into the Widener Collection.


When the picture was in the Bavarian Royal Collection at Munich, the King had been told that it was a Metsu. It was

recognized as being a Vermeer, however, by the Marquis de Caraman, French ambassador at Vienna from 1816 to 1827. The Marquis purchased it in 1826 when it was sold from the Bavarian Royal Collection, and placed it in his collection at Vienna. After his return to France, his collection was sold at auction at Paris in 1830, as noted above.

This painting, clearly, was esteemed highly in Vermeer's day, for its price at the 1696 sale was exceeded by the prices of only two other Vermeer pieces. In the sale catalogue it is described as being in a "case," which was probably a folding frame or shrine for preservation of paintings prized by the owner.

Its mode of composition is one favoured by Vermeer, as shown by the circumstance that he essayed this same general arrangement at least four times: in the *Reader*, Dresden Gallery, the *Woman Reading*, Rijks Museum, the *Pearl Necklace*, Berlin Gallery, and the one under consideration. The last-mentioned so closely resembles the Berlin example, both in placement of the figure and in the technique, that it is justifiable to suppose that both were painted at about the same time. The woman in the Widener work is older and of more distinguished appearance than the one at Berlin. She is, indeed, unique as a Vermeer model.

In colour as well as in dark and light arrangement this painting is typical of Vermeer. Note especially its insistence on blue and yellow notes and its larger secondary masses of white and of black. While Willem Kalf, the still life painter, and perhaps others of the Delft school, delighted in predominant blues and yellows, they did not paint the figure and its accessories with Vermeer's skill.



A YOUNG GIRL WITH A FLUTE

Widener Collection, Elkins Park, near Philadelphia

PLATE 28

Holding in her left hand a yellow flute which gives the picture its title, a girl sits at "close-up," leaning slightly to her left across the panel. Her hat is of pyramidal shape, with brown, yellow-grey and white stripes. She wears a grey-blue bodice with white cuffs and stomacher; about her neck is a white kerchief. Over her right shoulder appears a corner of the back of the familiar lion-headed chair. The background is of tapestry, of a large design, in brown, greenish-grey and dark blue.

Panel, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches by 7 inches.

Discovered by Dr. Bredius, 1906, in the collection of Jonkheer de Grez, Brussels. Exhibited on loan at the Royal Gallery of Paintings, the Mauritshuis, The Hague, 1907, and at the Pinakothek, Munich, 1921. Described by Dr. Bredius, in *Kunst Kronik*, XVIII, 24, as "The 36th Vermeer."

Formerly in the collections of: Jan Mahie van Boxtel en Liempde, of Bois-le-Duc, Holland; Mme. Maria de Grez (*née* Mahie van Boxtel en Liempde), Brussels; Jonkheer de Grez, Brussels; August Janssen, Amsterdam; Knoedler & Co., New York; Widener Collection.

This work is apparently a start or a sketch. Though there is no reason to doubt its being by Vermeer, it is curiously hot in colour — a circumstance possibly explained by its having been painted on a wood panel the warm colour of which has "come through."

A LADY PLAYING THE GUITAR
also called *Girl with Mandolin*

The John G. Johnson Art Collection, Philadelphia

Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

PLATE 29

A girl, whose smiling face is turned to her right, sits in the left part of the picture, playing a guitar. She is dressed in a yellow jacket trimmed with ermine and a white satin skirt. A landscape in gold frame hangs behind her. On the right, below the head of the musical instrument, is a table with blue cover.

Canvas, 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches by 17 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches.

Mr. Henri Marceau, curator of the Johnson Collection, who has made a careful study of the available data regarding both the Johnson and the Iveagh pictures of a guitar player, with particular emphasis on the important fact that the Johnson picture is on canvas whereas the Iveagh picture is on panel, gives (1936) the Johnson picture's history, so far as it is known, as follows:

"Formerly in the possession of Rt. Hon. W. Cowper-Temple, who lent it to the Old Masters Exhibition at Burlington House, London, 1871, (No. 266), where it was catalogued as by 'John Vandermeer van Delft.' The mistake has been made by writers who have dealt with the Iveagh *Guitar Player* of assuming that the picture lent by Rt. Hon. W. Cowper-Temple to the 1871 Exhibition was the Iveagh picture. The picture lent to that exhibition, however, as the catalogue of the exhibition clearly states, was a canvas, not a panel, and measured — again according to the catalogue — 20 inches high by 18 inches wide, roughly the dimensions of the Johnson picture.

Certainly no catalogue compiler's mistake could turn a canvas into a panel. From Rt. Hon. W. Cowper-Temple's possession, it apparently passed into the hands of M. de Gruyter, Amsterdam. Writing in 1896 M. Thoré (W. Bürger) states that this picture was in M. de Gruyter's possession and was for sale. Not being able to buy it himself M. Thoré persuaded Monsieur J. H. C. Cremer, Brussels, to buy it. It then passed, I believe, to Henry L. Bischoffsheim, London, and thence, at a date not yet determined, to John G. Johnson, Philadelphia. Our records unfortunately do not give the date of acquisition of the picture. We know that it was in the Collection as early as 1907, but prior to that have no information."

Dr. W. R. Valentiner, who wrote the catalogue of the Johnson Collection, says, in a letter dated February 28, 1936, regarding the acquisition of the picture by Mr. Johnson: "He paid \$10,000 for it and bought it from Sulley in London."

A painting with this title appears, after Vermeer's death, to have been in possession of his widow, and to have been one of two (the *Love Letter*, Beit Collection, being the other) with which the widow redeemed a debt of 617 florins. Whether this work was the Johnson *Guitar Player* or the one sometimes so called in the Iveagh Collection or perhaps some other painting, who can say? Further comment on this work will follow in the discussion of the Iveagh picture, the appearance of which, in the Iveagh Bequest in 1927, occasioned a controversy a contribution towards a possible settlement of which may be suggested in a letter written by Mr. Marceau, November 26, 1935, as follows:

"Concerning the pedigree of the Johnson Collection *Guitar Player*, attributed to Jan Vermeer, there is perhaps no picture in the collection offering greater opportunity for controversy

than this one and I may say perhaps no other picture here has given rise to so much conflicting and inaccurate information.

"For many years the Johnson picture was believed to be the one which, together with the *Love Letter*, was sold by Vermeer's widow to redeem a debt of some 617 florins. It was also identified as having appeared in a sale in Amsterdam in 1696 when a number of other Vermeers were sold. When Lord Iveagh's picture came to the British nation by bequest, it developed that his version of the same subject threw some doubt on the pedigree of the Johnson picture. It is my opinion that this whole question has never been satisfactorily solved.

"We have tentatively assigned the Johnson picture as a contemporary copy of the picture in the Iveagh Collection. Although I have not seen the Iveagh picture a comparison of the photographs would indicate that the English version is the better. There are certain passages in our picture here which are disturbing if they are to be considered as the work of Vermeer.

"It is true, however, that our picture was restored probably prior to Mr. Johnson's purchase of it and some little work has been done on it since he acquired it. This might conceivably account for the thinness of the paint surfaces which are not at all characteristic of Vermeer's method. It has been suggested by one authority that our version dates a generation later than Vermeer but in this I do not agree. It is probably a contemporary work, done perhaps by some one in the close circle of Vermeer and it may even contain some of the painter's own workmanship.

"It is painted on canvas, and is not signed, despite many statements to the contrary."



THE GUITAR PLAYER

also known as *The Lute Player**Iveagh Bequest, Ken Wood, Highgate, London*

PLATE 30

In the left of this picture, with her face turned towards the left, a young girl plays a guitar or lute. She is dressed in a yellow jacket trimmed with ermine and a white satin skirt. A landscape in gold frame hangs behind her. On the right, behind, is a table with blue cover on which are a box and a book with red edges.

Signed "J V MEER", the J, V and M connected.

Panel, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Possibly one of the two pictures with which Vermeer's widow paid a debt of 617 florins soon after the painter's death. It is said to have been owned by Mr. Evelyn Ashley, of Broadlands, the seat of Lord Palmerston, at one time Prime Minister, and to have been sold to Messrs. Agnew in the 1880's by Mr. Ashley, and by them sold to Lord Iveagh, who lent it to the Old Masters Exhibition at Burlington House in 1892 and again lent it to the Agnews' Exhibition in 1922.

For reasons which will immediately appear the Johnson *Guitar Player* and the Iveagh *Guitar Player* are further discussed together.

Describing the Iveagh Bequest of sixty-three paintings in the *Burlington Magazine*, December, 1927, Mr. A. C. R. Carter says: "The Iveagh Vermeer, *The Guitar Player*, is presumably the picture which was lent to Burlington House in 1892."

Lord Iveagh, formerly Sir Edward Guinness, who left his collection to the British nation in 1927, formed this collection

largely through purchase from Sir William Agnew. A reason why there has been confusion as regards the Iveagh *Guitar Player* and the Johnson *Guitar Player* lies in the fact that Dr. Hofstede de Groot, in his catalogue of paintings of Vermeer (1907), mentions *A Lady Playing a Guitar* as having been exhibited at the Royal Academy Winter Exhibition in 1892, No. 46; as having been in the Amsterdam sale, May 16, 1696, No. 4, 70 florins; as having been sold by Ph. van der Schley and D. du Pré, Amsterdam, December 22, 1817, No. 62, 65 florins, 5 (Coclens); as having been in the possession of the dealer Gruyter, Amsterdam; as having been in the collections of J. H. C. Cremer, Brussels, measuring, according to M. Thoré, 21 inches by 18 inches; of Lord Iveagh; of Henry Bischoffsheim, London; in the possession of the dealer Gooden, 1896; "now in the collection of John G. Johnson, Philadelphia." This picture is given by Dr. de Groot as "signed in full; canvas, 19½ inches by 16½ inches." As Mr. Carter remarks, "if Stephen Gooden were alive he could definitely clear the matter, but this specific Iveagh gift points to the Johnson possession being another version. Lord Iveagh certainly didn't buy from the Agnews to resell."

Mr. Edward Trautscholdt, in the *Burlington Magazine*, March, 1928, quotes Dr. de Groot as stating, in 1894, that two *Lute* or *Guitar Players* attributed to Vermeer were known to exist in England: one belonging to Lord Iveagh; the other in Mr. Bischoffsheim's collection, whence it had been lent to the exhibition of "Fair Women," Grafton Galleries, 1894. "This painting," says Mr. Trautscholdt, "was already in the Bischoffsheim Collection at the end of the eighties when Havard published his catalogue of Vermeer's works." Although Havard did not give the pedigree of this work Mr. Trautscholdt considers it to be the painting described by M. Thoré as having

been formerly in M. de Gruyter's collection and, in 1866, in the collection of M. Cremer, Brussels, who had bought it from M. de Gruyter.

In describing this painting of the Cremer Collection M. Thoré stated that "les cheveux sont retroussés mollement de deux côtés de la tête." Such description, as Mr. Trautscholdt points out, applies only to the painting in the Johnson Collection. It seems evident, therefore, that the Johnson picture was never in Lord Iveagh's possession. The Iveagh painting doubtless never changed hands after it was once placed in the Iveagh Collection.

The fact having been established of the existence of these two paintings, of similar title, each differing from the other in certain particulars, a question was naturally raised as to the authenticity of each, towards possible settlement of which Mr. Marceau's letter, just quoted in connection with the *Johnson Guitar Player*, is an interesting contribution.

Mr. R. R. Tatlock, who, as editor of the *Burlington Magazine*, printed Mr. Trautscholdt's contribution just cited, after commenting editorially on the controversy and calling attention to the differences in arrangement of the model's hair and in the placing of objects in the background of the two paintings, contends that what is really important is "the obvious fact that the Iveagh picture is on a far higher aesthetic plane than the Johnson one. The *impasto* is not only much richer and denser but is managed not merely for its own effect but in order to give significance to the system of modelling. There is crispness, too, in the handling of several passages in the Iveagh version, such as the ermine above the guitar, and, even more conspicuously, the dress covering the right knee, which is absent from the Johnson picture. The distribution of light and shade is much broader, more emphatic and telling in

the former work, and the general impression of character in the face is considerably subtler and somehow more real. This last remark applies also to the two landscapes in the picture within the picture. Then there are several odd details in the Iveagh canvas (*sic*) that tend to corroborate one's conviction. One of these is the way in which a single point of light on the gold frame is caught, as it were, peeping through the girl's curls. How typical is this of Vermeer! No one will, I believe," Mr. Tatlock concludes, "dispute the attribution of the Iveagh picture to Vermeer and it seems to me quite clear that, if that be admitted, there is no case for the Johnson one. The same artist did not paint both pictures. The author of the Johnson one, unfortunately, I cannot name; though, making a guess, I should say he belonged to the next generation."

Mr. Francis Kleinberger, of New York, on the other hand, who collaborated with the late Mr. Thomas A. Kirby, president of the American Art Association, in appraising the Johnson Collection for the State of Pennsylvania, has expressed positive belief in the attribution of the Johnson *Guitar Player* to Vermeer. Mr. Royal Cortissoz, who considered the various evidential points concerning this painting and the one in the Iveagh Collection, went on record as holding that the differences between them "do not indicate a copyist. A copyist would slavishly follow the composition of the copy before him, while the painter reproducing his own work would not unnaturally make changes. This is a truth which has always had its status in the analysis of problems of this kind. Which of these two *Guitar Players* was painted first is an open question, but it is impossible to accept Mr. Tatlock's assertion that the same hand did not paint both. Settling down to the same thing for a second time it would be entirely natural for Vermeer to make minor alterations, and even a major one, like the exchange of a thin *impasto* for a thick one, or vice versa."

Dr. W. R. Valentiner, Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, and a leading authority on Dutch painting, who has himself examined and compared both the Iveagh and the Johnson pictures, says, in a letter dated February 28, 1936: "I am convinced that the *Guitar Player* in the Iveagh Collection is better than the one in the Johnson Collection and the only original of the two."

There are five minor points which would cause any observant portrait painter to concede the superiority of the Iveagh head:

1. The background is brought very light against the shadow of the head. This is a motive which Vermeer often used. He painted the wall, in this instance, as it looked by way of contrast instead of figuring out how it ought to be.

2. The arrangement of the hair, which is not unlike that of the Louvre *Lace Maker* and the Beit *Girl at a Spinet*, is one which is more usual with Vermeer than is that in the Johnson work, in which it is parted in the middle, braided and wound around the head. The *Lady with a Lute*, to be sure, in the Metropolitan Museum, has her hair trigly triced up, but there seem to be more of Vermeer's women who have carelessly flowing locks than of those with hair smoothly arranged. It may be added that Mr. Paul Ettinger, writing in the *Burlington Magazine*, February, 1928, says of the Johnson *Guitar Player*: "I have always been struck by the style in which the lady's hair is dressed, a style quite unknown in Holland during the seventeenth century."

3. The manner in which a high light on the frame shows through the hair is decidedly a Vermeer touch. No copyist would be likely to think of doing it that way. It could be done only from nature or by closely following a painted work. This point alone seems to prove that the Iveagh painting could not have been copied from the Johnson one; it is humanly possible,

though improbable, that some one copying *vice versa* thought the high light on the frame a false touch and omitted it.

4. The light and shade of the Iveagh head, though not altogether satisfying, is more in Vermeer's manner than that of the Johnson head. The half-tone is manifestly too dark, as, however, it notably is in the *Soldier and the Laughing Girl*, Frick Collection. The manner of making the nose and forehead is more like Vermeer's particular kind of "wrongness" than is the hesitant fumbling in the modelling of the head of the Johnson picture.

5. Comparison of good photographic reproductions of both pictures gives a sense of a superior crispness of the geometric forms throughout the Iveagh work. In this, as if by an intellectual effort, the precise shape of triangle or oblong of tone has been registered. The same shape, more generalized, with its edges less perceptively studied, will be found to reappear in the Johnson picture. Any who have made copies of, or imitations after, paintings by great masters will recall their own efforts to avoid this ever-present liability to lose the specific quality of the master's "solid geometry."



THE MUSIC LESSON

also called *A Lady and a Gentleman at a Spinet* and
A Young Woman Playing on a Harpsichord

PLATE 2

Royal Collection, Great Britain, generally known as the "Windsor Castle Vermeer," though it has also been hung at Buckingham Palace.

Well back in a large room, and somewhat at the right of the canvas, stand a man and a woman; the former in profile regard-

ing her intently, the latter, her back turned to the spectator, touching the keyboard of a spinet of ornate design, with raised cover, on which is inscribed "Musica Letitiae Comes Medicina Doloris." Behind the instrument hangs a mirror, reflecting the woman's youthful head and shoulders. The light comes through quaint leaded glass windows, extreme left. In the foreground, lower right, is a table covered with a rug, and on this is a salver bearing the white jug, which, like the rug, was an accessory frequently used by Vermeer. Behind and to the left of the table stands a chair studded with brass nails, and hard by it on the tessellated marble floor is a violoncello.

Canvas, 29 inches by 25 inches.

Purchased on the Continent for the Royal Collection as a Frans van Mieris by Richard Dalton, librarian and keeper of pictures to King George III. Exhibited at the Royal Academy, Winter Exhibition, 1876, and at the London Guildhall, 1895.

The Music Lesson has been supposed to be identical with No. 6 of the 1696 sale.

Says Mr. James Henry Duveen, in his "Art Treasures and Intrigue," 1935, of Richard Dalton's purchase: "It is owing to his lack of knowledge that the Royal Collection includes one of its rarest pictures. He bought the *Young Woman Playing on a Harpsichord* by Vermeer as a Frans van Mieris, a most fortunate mistake, because a Frans van Mieris is worth about a hundredth part of a Vermeer! This picture, which was probably bought for less than a hundred pounds, is today worth from £80,000 to £100,000! The comic side of the mistake is that Frans van Mieris was then very fashionable and Vermeer forgotten and worthless. . . . There are about forty of his

pictures left to us, and it is quite safe to say that their present aggregate value is not less than five million pounds."

In design this is one of Vermeer's most subtly beautiful paintings. There is no portion of the composition which is not exquisitely dovetailed into the adjoining passages. The student of design should notice especially the way the gallant's shoulder comes against the picture behind him; how delightfully his head punctuates the wall space to its rear; how well his loose cuff fills the interval between his coat and the spinet. Notice also how the woman's head just breaks the short upper line of the spinet cover, and how her sleeve comes at precisely the right place in relation to the keyboard; how the pannier of her dress cuts the lower line of the spinet as it most agreeably should. The composition is full of these felicities the sum total of which makes the design superbly lovely.

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A YOUNG LADY AT THE VIRGINALS

National Gallery, London

PLATE 31

Her hands lightly touching the keys of a pair of virginals, a quilled keyboard instrument popular in the seventeenth century, a young woman stands in profile in the centre of the picture, looking over her right shoulder towards the spectator. Her costume consists of a blue silk bodice, over which is a mantle trimmed with lace, and a white satin skirt. She wears a string of pearls. The virginals, severe in line, have an Italianate landscape on the inside cover. On the wall behind the lady is a black-framed painting of a Cupid, upholding what is assumed to be the lucky number. A smaller picture hangs to the left — a landscape in ornate gold frame. The light is from a leaded

window, extreme left; a curtain is above this. Above the black and white tessellated pavement Delft tiles form a baseboard. The wall is of a nondescript colour, as often rendered by Vermeer.

Signed "I v Meer" (the I and M intertwined).

Canvas, 20 inches by 18 inches.

Possibly the *Lady Playing a Spinnet* of the 1696 sale. Sold, according to M. Thoré, at Amsterdam, July 11, 1714, 55 florins, the reference to which sale in the Hoet Catalogue, Vol. I, p. 176, is as follows: "12. Een Klaveçimbaelspeelster in een Kamer, van Vermeer van Delft, Konstig geschildert, 55 — o." Dr. Hofstede de Groot, however, thinks that this picture may be the other National Gallery Vermeer, *A Young Lady Seated at the Spinnet*, from the Salting Collection, since the dimensions are not given. It has belonged to the Jan Danser Nijman Collection, from which it was sold in 1797; to the Edward Solly Collection, London, sold 1847; to Madame Lacroix, Paris; to M. Thoré, Paris; bought through Lawrie and Company, from the Thoré Sale, Paris, December 5, 1892, for £2400, for the National Gallery.

The *Young Lady at the Virginals* is one of Vermeer's most skilful paintings. In it he quite overcame the sometimes stodgy handling of his youth and did everything crisply and neatly. The satin skirt is painted with remarkable skill. There is no passage, indeed, in which the hand falters, unless possibly in the lady's ridiculous curls—and even here the painter was doubtless the victim of a foolish fashion.

Any qualification of praise of this National Gallery Vermeer concerns only its state of preservation. Though very fine in design and space-filling qualities, it has acquired, presumably through over-cleaning, a greenish tone. The canvas, to use a

term of the studios, has been "skinned." It is likely that Vermeer, following a fashion to which Rubens gave currency, sometimes started his picture from a blue underpainting to which he applied glazes of yellow lake and other warm pigments. If the glazing faded or was rubbed off the tonal result would be as in this work.

It hardly need be added that there is cleaning of paintings which greatly injures them. Very few are competent to clean an old master properly, and those who are really expert at it are sure to be the most cautious and conservative.



A YOUNG LADY SEATED AT THE SPINET

National Gallery, London

PLATE 32

Before a marbled spinet at the left of the painting sits a young girl in blue costume, facing the spectator, her hands on the keyboard. The cover of the instrument, which is tilted backwards, has a landscape decoration. In the extreme foreground, left, is a violoncello, partly cut off by the side and lower lines of the picture. The light from the window, left, is somewhat obscured by a large tapestry curtain. Delft tiles form a baseboard, and the floor is in black and white tiles.

As already noted in connection with *The Concert* in the Gardner Collection in Boston, the picture entitled *The Procuress* by Dirck van Baburen is shown hanging on the wall behind the young lady as she sits at the spinet.

Signed on wall to right of girl's head: "J v Meer" (the J and M intertwined).

Canvas, 20¼ inches by 18 inches.

Dr. Hofstede de Groot thinks that this may be No. 37 of the 1696 sale. It was discovered by M. Thoré in the gallery of Count von Schönborn's Schloss Weissenstein, near Pommersfelden, in Bavaria, a castle built in 1711-18. In the catalogue of the von Schönborn Collection, it was attributed to "Jacob van der Meer." These facts were set forth by M. Thoré in his *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* articles in 1866. Dr. de Groot gives record of the sale of the painting at Paris, May 17, 1867, from the von Schönborn Collection Sale. At the Thoré Sale, Paris, December 5, 1892, No. 32, 25,000 francs; exhibited at the Royal Academy Winter Exhibition, 1894, lent by T. Humphry Ward; in the possession of the Paris dealer Ch. Sedelmeyer, "Catalogue of 300 Paintings," 1898, No. 85; in the collection of George Salting, London, whence, by bequest to the British nation, 1910, it passed to the National Gallery, London, No. 2568.

This is an extremely skilful performance, even for Vermeer. It reveals no faltering anywhere, even though the observation of *nuances* is not so close as in some of his other works. The piece has defects of its qualities. Everything, evidently, went so easily that Vermeer was not tempted to work intensively. As a painting it thus somewhat lacks quality. Though the drapery was made with notable ease and freedom this rendering was too palpably *en longue*; the touch, in other words, runs too much with the form, and one does not get a sense of the light sliding across the form, as in some Vermeers. The head, on the other hand, is painted with much sophistication, and with due regard to the incidence of the light upon it. The nose, interestingly, is modeled much as in the *Head of a Young Girl* at The Hague, though with observation that is less close.

A LOVE LETTER
also called *Young Lady Writing*
Beit Collection, London

PLATE 33

Inditing a letter at a table a young woman sits, right of the picture, while a servant, centre, stands with folded arms and looks over her shoulder towards the window, left.

The young woman, who leans forward, wears a quaint cap and a low-cut bodice with short sleeves. The table is spread with the rug of reddish hue often used by Vermeer. A chair with velvet upholstery fills in the foreground, lower right. The pavement is of black and white marble.

The lighting is from a stained or painted glass window, covered by a thin curtain the upper part of which is irradiated with translucent light. On the discreet grey wall, behind both figures, hangs a very large picture. It seems to represent the Finding of Moses. In the window to the left is a coat-of-arms, no longer possible of identification.

Signed on a sheet of paper hanging from the table in shadow, "J v Meer" (the J and M intertwined).

Canvas, 28 inches by 23 inches.

This picture was after Vermeer's death in the possession of his widow, Catharina Bolnes. It was given by her to a baker for a debt of 617 florins, together with a picture of a lady playing a guitar. Sales: Josua van Belle, Rotterdam, September 6, 1730, No. 92, 155 florins; Franco van Bleiswijk Collection, Delft; inherited by Hendrik van Slingelandt, The Hague, 1734; Miller von Aichholz Collection, Vienna; E. Secrétan Sale, Paris, July 1, 1889, No. 140, 62,000 francs; in the possession of M. Sedelmeyer, Paris, 1898, "Catalogue of 300

Paintings," No. 86; Marianoni Collection, Paris; in the possession of F. Kleinberger, Paris, by whom it was sold to Alfred Beit, London; Sir Otto Beit, London, d. December, 1930; Lady Beit, London.

The leading of the glass in the window is somewhat similar in pattern to that of the window in other pictures by Vermeer at Berlin, Brunswick, New York, and in the Windsor Castle *Music Lesson*. The picture which is hanging on the wall appears also, in smaller form, in the *Astronomer* of the Rothschild Collection in Paris.

A notable circumstance of this painting, technically one of the artist's most adequate, is that its *chiaroscuro* is markedly effective. It is more Rembrandtesque, in brief, than are most of Vermeer's other works; not that the technique is particularly like Rembrandt's, but by reason of less emphasis than Vermeer usually gave to reflected lights and less dependence on linear design, the composition gets its effectiveness considerably from its disposition of dark and light masses. In paint quality, too, it is "fatter" than are some of Vermeer's other works.



YOUNG GIRL AT A SPINET

Beit Collection, London

PLATE 34

At a spinet, only a portion of which is seen, extreme left of the picture, sits a girl, her head in three-quarters towards the spectator, her hands on the keys. She wears a dress of white satin with a shawl over it.

Canvas, 9½ inches by 7½ inches.

Sale: W. Reyers, Amsterdam, 1814.



HEAD OF A YOUNG MAN

Possibly a portrait of Simon Decker

Collection of Ernest W. Savory, Bristol, England

Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft

PLATE 35

The head and shoulders, down to the elbows, of a young man with long flowing hair are depicted. The head is nearly full face, turning to the sitter's left. He has a rather low forehead, a very long nose, extremely full lips over which is a minute mustache. He wears a white handkerchief with elaborately painted fringe.

Signed with the monogram "I V M."

Canvas, 23 inches by 18 inches.

This painting was sold at a London salesroom, 1922, and was subsequently acquired by the present owner. When the old varnish and certain overpainting were removed the monogram I V M was discovered in the background.

Certain Netherland authorities, when consulted regarding the painting, would not concede that it could be by Vermeer, but asserted that it is a characteristic self-portrait by Adriaen van de Velde.

M. Guiffrey, director of the Louvre, on the other hand, Dr. Hans Vollmer, editor of *Thieme's Dictionary of Painters* and a late director of the Buda-Pesth Gallery, Sir Joseph Duveen, Mr. P. S. Konody, Mr. Arthur Ruck and Mr. E. V. Lucas were unanimous in pronouncing this a work by Vermeer of Delft. There came, furthermore, into Mr. Savory's hands a copy of an old wood engraving of this subject showing below the lower left corner the engraved line: "J. Vander Meer pinxit," and on the right, partly obliterated through a tear in the paper, the

name of the engraver, "—noboni, Sc." Vermeer's monogram appears in this engraving exactly where it figures in the painting itself. On the paper mount, in pencil, is inscribed the name of Simon Decker, who has been assumed to be the sitter. Simon Decker was a sexton at Delft and lost his life in 1654 in the explosion in which Carel Fabritius was killed. See Plate 36.

Monograms on paintings are not conclusive, as they can be forged. An expert restorer, however, who handled the painting in question has certified that the repainting which he removed was at least a century old. As the monogram was found under the repainting it must be older than the early nineteenth century, at which time Vermeer had no reputation and hence was unlikely to be selected by a forger for exploitation.

The technique of this canvas has been thought to be like that of the *Portrait of a Woman* at Buda-Pesth, but it can hardly be said to have the convincing rectitude of the latter, the meticulous and yet broad treatment of the accessories or the beautiful separation of light and shade on the face. The Bristol work, nevertheless, has opalescent greys which are quite Vermeer-esque.

If, indeed, this *Head of a Young Man* is by Vermeer, and if the sitter is Decker, the Delft sexton, it must be a very early work, painted before 1654. Its being a youthful performance might account for its not being of first quality. A photograph of the painting was published in *Illustrated London News*, November 15, 1924, and *Literary Digest*, December 13, 1924. The latter periodical published also, from Houbraken's "Groote Schouberg," an engraved self-portrait of Adriaen van de Velde, which, as studied by Dr. de Groot, seemed to justify a belief that this man is identical with the *Young Man* of the Savory Collection.

A YOUNG GIRL

Collection of Anthony F. Reyre, London

PLATE 37

Head and shoulders of a young woman, with brown eyes and hair. Under the white collar is a yellowish dress. The blue ribbon on the breast is echoed by a blue hair-ribbon.

Canvas, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Formerly in the collection of Charles E. Carruthers, Esq., Batheaston, Somerset, England. It was catalogued (No. 62) as a Vermeer at Christie's, London, March 23, 1934, and described under the title "An Auctioned 'Ugly Duckling' becomes a Swan: a Vermeer Revealed," by Mr. Frank Davis in *Illustrated London News*, April 20, 1935.

Mr. Davis reports that this painting was sold for £504, and was placed on public view, May 1, 1935, at an exhibition of Old Masters' Paintings, Gallery of Mr. A. F. Reyre, 22, Old Bond Street. He adds: "Very careful cleaning, relining and conservative restoration have brought this delicious and sensitive portrait of a girl (possibly one of the painter's own daughters) to its present satisfactory condition."

Writing of this picture in the *Burlington Magazine* for June, 1935, Dr. Tancred Borenius says: "The character of the craquelure throughout the picture offers in itself a very strong argument in favour of Vermeer's authorship; and the same is true of the handling of the paint, notably in such passages as the lace edging the collar. Apart from these details of technique, the whole scheme of colour, its power of luminosity and vivacity of sparkle (in passages such as the ear-rings and the hair-ribbon) strongly suggest no one but Vermeer; and in its utter simplicity of disposition, the picture has a sense of bulk

and imposing architectural construction, which point in one direction alone."

Dr. W. R. Valentiner writes, under date of September 27, 1935: "I consider *The Head of a Girl*, now belonging to Reyre in London, an original."

The picture was in the Vermeer exhibition at the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, 1935.



CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF MARY AND MARTHA
National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

PLATE 38

The Saviour sits in profile towards the right of the canvas. He looks upward at Martha, who leans towards Him holding a basket in which a loaf of bread is seen. His left hand hangs over the arm of the chair. His right hand is extended towards Mary who in the lower left foreground sits at His feet. He wears a dull blue garment. Martha's bodice is of a yellow check with red border; she has white sleeves and on her head a kerchief of curious yellow hue. Mary, clad in blue and red, has a parti-coloured cloth of white and red extending from her head down over her shoulders. Her head is relieved against a white table cloth, and behind her is seen an oriental rug, the undercloth of the table. Christ's right hand, according to an indication still visible, was originally painted in a position somewhat different from that which it now has.

Signed, lower left, on edge of bench on which Mary sits: "I v Meer" (monogram). This signature was first discerned in 1901.

Canvas, 62 ½ inches by 55 ½ inches.

Bought by a furniture dealer from a family in Bristol for £8. Arthur Leslie Collection; sold to Forbes and Paterson, London, April, 1901; W. A. Coats Collection, Skelmorlie Castle; gift of W. A. Coats to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, and transferred by his two sons in 1927.

This painting was described by Dr. Tancred Borenius in the *Burlington Magazine*, January, 1923, his exposition of its possibly Italianate affinity seeming to be very important. It is brought out in the article that at about the time when Vermeer, born in 1632, was growing up in Holland, Bernardo Cavallino, of Naples (born 1622 and died 1654), painted a picture entitled *The Death of St. Joseph*, now in the Naples Museum. It is a good work of art which no one thought of connecting with Vermeer until Dr. Borenius called attention to the fact that the head and hands of its figure of Christ are almost precisely the same as the head and hands of the figure of the Saviour in the *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha*. See Plate 39.

"Cavallino," says Dr. Borenius, after referring to the surmise of Vermeer's having studied in Italy, "died in 1654. There would thus just have been time for Vermeer as a young man to come into personal contact with Cavallino prior to his acquiring the mastership at Delft at the end of 1653."

The similarity of the head and hands in the two paintings to which Dr. Borenius adverts is clearly more than a distant resemblance — it is such that photographs of the two are difficult to tell apart. One of these pictures, quite evidently, was copied from the other. The identical twist of the thumbs should convince any practising painter of this certainty.

Admitting it as a probability that amounts almost to assurance that one of the paintings was in part copied from the other,

one is led to four possibilities any one of which might be explanatory.

1. Vermeer may have visited Italy, may there have studied with or known Bernardo Cavallino and had an opportunity to copy after him details for inclusion in a picture of his own.

2. Cavallino may have been in Holland—he is stated (“Bryan’s Dictionary of Painters and Engravers”) to have studied the works of Rubens and Poussin. It thus would have been possible for him to be Vermeer’s master, friend or acquaintance.

3. Leonard Bramer (1596–c. 1667), conjecturally brother of Vermeer’s godfather, Peter Bramer, may have studied with Cavallino in Italy and may have brought home with him either a copy of Cavallino’s picture or one in which the head and hand of Christ had been copied after Cavallino.

4. There may have been, as Mr. R. H. Wilenski has suggested, a contact about 1649–50 between Vermeer and Dirck van Baburen, whose picture of *The Procuress* appears as hanging on the wall in Vermeer’s *Lady at the Virginals* (National Gallery) and in his *Concert* (Gardner Museum). Baburen, as Mr. Wilenski notes, is known to have gone to Italy and to have been impressed by Caravaggio, his *Procuress* being in the Caravaggio-Honthorst tradition. Cavallino and Caravaggio painted somewhat alike, and it would have been natural for Baburen, while at Naples, to make a copy after Cavallino.

Reservations regarding each of these foregoing conjectures suggest themselves.

It is unlikely that Vermeer could have gone to Italy, studied and completed his *Wanderjahr* and so returned to Holland before he was twenty-one, at which age he entered the Guild of St. Luke. If, furthermore, he had been in Italy, it is improbable

that he would have immediately, if at all, have submitted himself to the influence of Fabritius, as Arnold Bon's poem says he did.

Even if Cavallino at some time visited Holland it is not altogether plausible to assume that he brought with him from Naples this painting, or copies of or studies from it.

Bramer could, of course, for anything known to the contrary, have been in Naples, could have copied the Cavallino painting in whole or in part and could have brought his copy home with him to Delft where portions of it might have been used by Vermeer for copying. The latter's technique, nevertheless, in the works which can be attributed to him unreservedly, indicates that he depended on having the model before him; and for a man not yet twenty-one to have made a copy from a copy so marvellously that the second copy looks closely like the original would be much of a feat.

A personal conclusion is this: that quite conceivably the *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha*, even though bearing a Vermeer signature, was not painted by Vermeer at all but by some other clever young Hollander, — perhaps Bramer, perhaps Baburen, conceivably the mysterious Vermeer of Utrecht, if such a painter ever actually existed — who at Naples saw the Cavallino painting, who took the head and hands of Christ from it and who then painted the picture in Italy or in Holland.

This supposition simplifies an otherwise complicated problem. It relieves one of the necessity of rather reluctantly, as in the first edition of this book, accepting the ascription to Vermeer of this painting of *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha*. This was then described as "apparently one of his earliest pictures," and its size, unusual for Vermeer, was commented upon as follows: "It is the only one besides *The*

Courtesan which the artist made so large. It is rather heavily painted with a full, flowing brush which is managed with a hand that, for Vermeer, seems rather clumsy." Studied further, it looks to be a painting which, however beautiful, is not in a manner characteristic of Vermeer. Such a supposition, it may be added, does not confirm the implication in the title of Dr. Borenius's *Burlington Magazine* article: "Vermeer's Master."

As possibly evidential it should be added that a Cavallino painting, *The Woman Taken in Adultery* in the Verona Gallery, was at one time tentatively ascribed to Vermeer. *The Death of St. Joseph* at the Naples Museum has itself also been described as showing a colouration that is a very distinct anticipation of Vermeer's.

A possible connection between the figures of Christ and a woman in a very sketchy study for a picture of *Christ Blessing Little Children*, attributed to Carel Fabritius, and the corresponding figures of Christ and Mary in the Vermeer painting, has been developed by Sir Charles J. Holmes in the *Burlington Magazine*, January, 1905. The drawing, found in the British Museum by Mr. A. M. Hind and ascribed by him to Fabritius, was studied by Sir Charles, who became convinced that two of the figures in the drawing were used as models or suggestions by Vermeer. If the latter actually was a pupil of Fabritius, and if the *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* is unquestionably by Vermeer, the possibility of such use of a Fabritius sketch cannot be denied.

In his chronology of Vermeer's paintings, in his *Pantheon* article, referred to elsewhere, Dr. W. R. Valentiner suggests that this religious painting may have been used in 1653 to gain Vermeer's admittance to the Guild of St. Luke.

VIEW OF DELFT

Royal Gallery of Paintings, the Mauritshuis, The Hague

PLATE 3

The town of Delft is depicted from the vantage of the shore across the canal. Most prominent against the sky is the tower of the Nieuwe Kerk, of Gothic design. A mass of trees, rendered with little dots of colour after the manner called *pointillé* in nineteenth century French painting, is seen in front of the church, and before these is discerned a small arched bridge. To the right of the church is an old house, adjoining the city wall; and still further to the right, two towers rise from the wall above the Rotterdam Gate. In front of the latter is a large canal boat. To the left of the bridge is a good-sized building, bearing a cupola; beneath this is the Schiedam Gate. Still further to the left are the rooflines of several houses whose façades are for the most part hidden by a high wall. Before these houses, along the dyke, are moored canal boats.

In the immediate foreground, near the water's edge, somewhat to the left, stand two market women. At the extreme left, close to a boat, are two men and two women, one of the latter holding a child in her arms. The sky is filled with cumulus clouds, the intervening spaces of sky being very blue, indeed.

Signed on the boat to the left, "J v M" (the letters intertwined).

Canvas, 39 inches by 46½ inches.

Sales: Amsterdam, 1696, No. 31, 200 florins; S. J. Stinstra, Amsterdam, May 22, 1822, No. 112, 2900 florins; acquired by the Dutch government, as indicated by a letter from the minister of the interior to the director of the museum, dated June 5, 1822.

The great interest of this painting, apart from its intrinsic merit, lies in its being, perhaps, the first landscape made in the modern spirit. Its tones are painted quite frankly as they appeared — blue is blue; green, green; even red, red, for Vermeer, unlike some moderns, had no *parti-pris*, as regards outdoor colour. He did not care how Rembrandt or Ruysdael might have done the thing.

The other Netherland landscape painters apparently composed their pictures from carefully studied pencil drawings. There is extant a poetaster artist's rhymed advice to young painters to go forth, look at nature, make sketches from it, but to paint the picture in the studio. This work of Vermeer's, in contradistinction, seemingly must have been painted from nature. It also gives an impression of having been worked at again and again. The effect is simple and compelling, but the detail is subtle and elaborated. The focus of the composition is at the church and the trees in front of it. Hither the eye wanders naturally. The foreground with its little figures is not quite so carefully made, presumably in order to intensify the focus in the middle distance.

The background of this *View of Delft* looks modern, with its sky of a frank blue and its grey-white clouds. It is as if a painter of Holland had for once taken off his amber glasses and rendered nature as seen through no medium. The houses are of a reddish general tone, which is natural enough since they are of brick. The trees are not only green, but they have a bluish tinge quite different from the foliage with black half-tones painted by Ruysdael and Hobbema.

M. Gustave Vanzype has described another *View of Delft*, owned when he wrote about it by Michel van Gelder of Uccle, near Brussels; and he published a half-tone print of this work, which he thought to be by Vermeer. It is similar in aspect to

the Hague example, except that it is smaller and is not so wide, certain of the houses on the left being cut out. Since M. Thoré mentions a copy of the *View of Delft* made by a painter of Holland in the early nineteenth century, it seems possible that this may be the van Gelder picture. There also exists a so-called study for the Delft painting at the Städel Art Institute, Frankfurt-on-Main.

The van Gelder work, if a copy, is quite slavishly executed. The sky, however, is different from that in the Vermeer landscape, and especially in regard to the shape and arrangement of the clouds. In old-time copying it was customary to take liberties with the original, but one hardly sees how a mere copyist would have ordered the thing as skilfully as in this sky. At the same time, it is unlikely that Vermeer would have made so elaborate a study for a picture upon which he must have worked quite intensively, perhaps at intervals over a term of years.

M. Vanzype himself admits that the trees in the van Gelder work are of a less bluish (*bleuté*) green, and also that it has a less marked patina of age than has the painting at The Hague. These circumstances cause one to doubt the attribution of the van Gelder landscape to Vermeer.

Mr. E. V. Lucas has written of Vermeer's *View of Delft*: "Its serenity is absolute, its charm complete," and Mr. R. H. Wilenski may be quoted: "Perhaps the finest sky of any picture in the world."

Augustus J. C. Hare, in his "Sketches in Holland and Scandinavia," says of Delft: "Pepys calls it 'a most sweet town, with bridges and a river in every street.' . . . It has scarcely changed. The *View of Delft* in the Museum at The Hague might have been painted yesterday."

THE TOILETTE OF DIANA

Royal Gallery of Paintings, the Mauritshuis, The Hague

PLATE 40

Diana, looking downward upon a kneeling nymph who bathes her feet in a small brass bowl, sits, in profile, rather to the right of the picture. She wears a brown robe; her maid-servant, a purple skirt and brown bodice. By the goddess's side, and facing in the same direction, sits another nymph in red jacket and blue skirt. She nurses Diana's right foot. Behind, and still further to the right, is a young girl, looking on with interest. At the left of the composition is seen the back of a nymph, partly nude, partly covered with burnt orange drapery. Behind the group are trees. In the foreground, extreme left, a black and white dog views the scene with sapient curiosity.

A signature, well-nigh effaced, is discerned towards the left.

Canvas, 39 inches by 42 inches.

Sale of the Collection of Neville D. Goldsmid, of The Hague, at Paris, May 4, 1876, No. 68, 10,000 francs; Royal Gallery, The Hague. Formerly attributed to Nicolaes Maes, afterward to Vermeer of Utrecht and later, by some authorities, to Vermeer of Delft — an attribution which has become more plausible if the discovery in 1901 of the signature in *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* is to be considered significant evidence of authenticity.


The painter of this picture, whoever he was, had what may be called an excellent working idea of light and shade. The heads are made with understanding of the separations of light,

half-tone and shadow — an apparently simple achievement, but many painters never attain to it.

M. Vanzype regards it as a very wonderful work, as doubtless it is by comparison with most paintings of the same sort. It hardly holds its own with some of the universally accepted Vermeers. If it is his he must have been imitating certain Italian painters. Conceivably, indeed, if Leonard Bramer really was Vermeer's teacher, he could have inspired in his pupil an Italianate manner which appears here.

Parts of the painting which do not look at all like Vermeer can be indicated. The trees are not in the manner of those of the *View of Delft*; they plainly were invented, or "faked," instead of being studied from nature. The shadows throughout the work are brownish; the draperies are orange and pink rather than of the blue and lemon-yellow tones which Vermeer made famous. The dog and the spindling plant near by suggest Fabritius rather than Vermeer. Another possible suggestion is that Anthony Palamedes, who was a predecessor of Vermeer as dean of the Guild of St. Luke, conceivably may have either influenced the painting of this picture or had a hand in it. In the art gallery of the public library of Malden, Massachusetts, is a painting by Palamedes, *Boy with Dogs*. This has in the lower left-hand corner a dog of similar head to the one in the *Diana* and painted in much the same manner. The treatment of the brownish foliage in the background also resembles that in the *Diana*. This work of Palamedes at Malden is signed, and is dated 1656.

Although the *Diana* contains passages of fine painting one would not be surprised if further evidence or study should some day establish the unlikelihood of its being by Jan Vermeer of Delft.



HEAD OF A YOUNG GIRL

Royal Gallery of Paintings, the Mauritshuis, The Hague

PLATE 4

A young girl, wearing a quaint blue turban, and with a scarf of blue and yellowish white hanging over her shoulder, looks, with head turned to the left, towards the spectator. A large pearl is pendant at the ear. Her dress is of yellowish green.

Signed in the upper left corner: "J V Meer" (the J, V and M intertwined).

Canvas, 18½ inches by 16 inches.

Possibly the *Portrait in Antique Costume*, 1696 sale, No. 38, 36 florins (\$14.40). In the collection of A. A. des Tombe, The Hague, who bought it for 2½ florins and who in 1903 bequeathed it to the Royal Gallery, The Hague. There are two other similar portraits ascribed to Vermeer: one in the Arenberg Gallery; the other, the *Smiling Girl* of the Mellon Collection.

This *Head of a Young Girl* at The Hague discloses supremely Vermeer's mastery of light and shade. Nowhere in it is any effort evident to paint a passage in the direction of the form. In the modeling it is lighter here, darker there, just as the light or shadow made it. No mouth, surely, was ever rendered more beautifully than this, simply and yet subtly. There is no dragging the paint along the rounded forms of the lips; no effort to imitate the texture, as of the minute cracks.

Since no mannered handling is visible one cannot see how the colour was floated on. The form is there, adequately expressed, the means and mode of its making concealed.

Concerning the *Girl's* nose a similar enthusiastic word can

be said. The nose of commerce is only too familiar in exhibitions of painting: the kind shown in fashionable portraits, with button-hole nostrils, over-accented planes and a sweaty, greasy high light. The nose here is made solely by the light and shade, for one cannot see the further outline.

Concerning the present condition of this picture Mr. R. H. Wilenski ("Introduction to Dutch Art") offers the following information: "When this head was bought by M. des Tombe at auction in The Hague for two and a half gulden it was in a bad condition. It has since been restored and, in parts, repainted."



THE READER

sometimes called *A Girl Reading a Letter*

Rijks Museum, Amsterdam

PLATE 5

Reading a letter held in both hands a young woman, midway in the composition, stands facing towards the left. She wears a coat of light blue silk over a white skirt. Before her is a table, on which is spread a rumpled rug. It bears a book bound in parchment. Behind the table is a lion-headed chair. In the foreground, extreme right, is another chair. A large map hangs on the grey wall. Although no window is seen the light seems to come from one to the left.

Canvas, 18½ inches by 15½ inches.

Sales: Possibly in the Pieter van der Lip Sale, Amsterdam, June 14, 1712, No. 22, 110 florins, though the indefinite notation, "een leezent Vrouwtje, in een Kamer, door vander Meer van Delft, 110 - 0" (Hoet Catalogue, Vol. I, p. 147), could apply to the *Girl Reading a Letter*, Dresden. H. Ten Kate,

Amsterdam, June 10, 1801, No. 118, 110 florins; Paris, 1809; Lapeyrière, Paris, 1825; Comte de Sommariva, Paris, 1839. Formerly in the Van der Hoop Collection, Amsterdam, No. 129. Bequest to the Rijks Museum.

This work, well spaced, its arrangement of dark and light very effective, is thoroughly characteristic of Vermeer. The composition, while somewhat resembling the arrangements of the *Pearl Necklace*, Berlin, and the *Girl Reading*, Dresden, is unlike the others in that the window is omitted. In no painting has the artist been more successful than in this in conveying a sense of the light sliding across the wall and the map on it. An admirable bit, small in itself but important in relationship to the whole design, is the knob of the mapstick. It is carefully finished and yet is not obtrusive. Note, too, the way in which the chair, placed in the right foreground, breaks the upright line of the side of the picture and fills in the lower part connecting with the skirt. A dark mark against the woman's cheek is apparently the suggestion of a black ribbon fastened at the side of the hair.

Reference has been made (page 86) to the tribute which Vincent Van Gogh paid to this work by Vermeer.



A MAID-SERVANT POURING MILK

also called *The Milkwoman*, *Girl with Bread*, *The Cook*

Rijks Museum, Amsterdam

PLATE 6

Pouring milk from a jug into a bowl a young woman, wearing a white kerchief, a bodice and a skirt, stands at a green-covered table on which is a basket of bread. Behind the basket

is a pitcher. The light is from a window to the left, high in the composition. Beyond it are suspended a basket and a brass utensil; above these at the extreme upper part of the canvas hangs a small pitcher. The wall is blank, except for two nails, painted with meticulous care. On the floor, at the right and behind the woman's figure, is a wooden foot-warmer. The baseboard is of tiles.

Signed, "J V Meer" (the J and M intertwined).

Canvas, 18 inches by 16¼ inches.

Amsterdam, sale of 1696, 175 florins (\$60), No. 2; Amsterdam, April 20, 1701, No. 7, 320 florins (\$128); Amsterdam, Jacob van Hoek Sale, April 12, 1719, No. 20, 126 florins (\$49.40); Amsterdam, de Neufville Sale, June 19, 1765, No. 65, 560 florins (\$224); Amsterdam, J. J. de Bruyn Sale, September 12, 1798, No. 32, 1550 florins (\$720); Amsterdam, H. Muilman, April 12, 1813, No. 96, 2113 florins (\$846); Six Collection, Amsterdam, until 1907. Bought, 1907, for Rijks Museum from M. Six van Vromade, together with thirty-eight other paintings, for 750,000 florins. This picture was then considered worth nearly half the sum paid for the collection, possibly 300,000 florins (\$120,000).

The *Milkwoman* is one of the few paintings which have been continuously attributed to Vermeer. Sir Joshua Reynolds in his diary of a "Journey in Holland" speaks of seeing this picture at Amsterdam.

It is apparently an early work; the *facture* is rather heavy and loaded, and little details, such as the kerchief, are not made so skilfully as in works of a later date. There is a Millet-like solidity and firmness about the figure which is admirable, and the light and shade, well and simply rendered, seem to exist.

In a lecture on "Vermeer of Delft — and Modern Painting," one of the Charlton Lectures on Art, delivered at Armstrong College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, in the University of Durham, 1925, Sir George Clausen, R. A., says: "The picture of the *Woman Pouring Milk*, at Amsterdam, is one of the world's masterpieces."



THE LOVE LETTER
Rijks Museum, Amsterdam

PLATE 7

Holding in her right hand a letter which has been handed to her by a smiling maid-servant, a seated lady is seen through an open door, her head turning sharply to the right. The handle of a lute is in her left hand. She has pearls around her neck and in her hair. Her jacket is trimmed with ermine; the skirt is of silk. The servant, her left arm akimbo while her right arm is at her side, stands to the right of her mistress at whom she looks down. Near by is a waste-paper basket; in front of this, a cushion box, apparently the same one which appears in the Louvre *Lace Maker*, with strands of coloured silk issuing from it. Behind the lady are two pictures, hanging on the wall above a panel of gilt Spanish leather. Of these pictures one, a landscape, depicting a road on the edge of a wood, seems to Mr. Eduard Plietzsch to be possibly by Jan Wijnants; the other, a marine painting, suggests to him the colour and composition of a work by Jacob van Ruysdael. Somewhat to the left is a mantelpiece with columns. The foreground, right, is filled in with a large tapestry, draped above and at the side of the door. In front of this is a chair, with some sheets of music. At the other side of the door hangs, in sharp perspective, a map. A pair of

wooden shoes and a long-handled brush fill in the front. The floor is in black and white squares.

Signed on the wall above the basket work: "J V Meer" (the J and M intertwined).

Canvas, 17½ inches by 15 inches.

Possibly the painting of the 1696 sale titled *A Lady to Whom a Maid-Servant is Bringing a Letter*, No. 7, which sold for 70 florins (\$28). Exhibited at The Hague, 1890. In the collection of J. F. van Lennep, Amsterdam; sale, Messchert van Vollenhoven, Amsterdam, March 14, 1892, 41,000 florins; purchased in 1893 for the Rijks Museum, with the help of the Rembrandt Society.

This painting was presumably made late in Vermeer's life — perhaps at about the time of the Czernin Gallery *Studio*. The technical perfection of details such as the tessellated flooring and the mantel behind the lady's hand suggest maturity of talent. The servant, to be sure, is not very well done, but the lady's head is admirable in light and shade; it must have been viewed freshly and without prejudice.

Vermeer, indeed, saw and rendered this woman's head with the same uncompromising directness and aloofness with which he saw and rendered the scrap basket. The one meant, apparently, as little to him as the other, except that the head, being the focusing point of the picture, is painted quite closely. This aloofness of sympathy is often a characteristic of great artists.

The piece of Spanish leather behind the figures is worthy of note because it is mentioned in the inventory of Vermeer's effects; it helps to identify the painting as by Vermeer. The basket is of remarkable artistry, made with consummate ease

from soft flowing pigment, the aspect rendered supremely well and yet with marked economy of effort.

In his *Pantheon* article, dealing with the chronology of Vermeer's paintings, Dr. Valentiner dates this Rijks Museum *Love Letter* as having been painted before 1664 on the basis of comparison with a recently discovered work by Pieter de Hooch, dated 1668.



THE LITTLE STREET IN DELFT

Rijks Museum, Amsterdam

PLATE 8

Façade of a three-storeyed brick house. At the open door sits a woman sewing. Two children play before the house. Through a doorway is seen a woman at a washtub. To the left of this is another doorway, closed, by the side of which stands another and smaller house, nearly covered with ivy. The windows are small and leaded, and all of them, except in one of the larger houses, have the lower part closed by shutters. The street, foreground, is paved with square cobblestones. Over the roof-lines, which show two chimneys, is a grey sky with cumulus clouds.

Signed, on the left, on the wall of the house: "J V Meer."

Canvas, 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 17 inches.

Apparently the *Street in Delft* of the 1696 sale, No. 32, sold for 72 florins (\$28.80). It was once in the collection of G. W. Oosten de Bruyn, Amsterdam, sold April 8, 1800; then in the van Winter Collection, Amsterdam; later in the Six Collection, Amsterdam; offered to the Louvre, 1921, but offer withdrawn;

by gift of Sir Henri Deterding it passed from the J. Six Collection, Amsterdam, into ownership of the Rijks Museum.

The painting, to judge from its technical manner, belongs to about the time of the *View of Delft* and the *Milkwoman*. It is smoother in surface, however, than the latter, which is one of the most heavily "loaded" of Vermeer's canvases. Much in the workmanship looks like de Hooch, but the signature is believed to settle the attribution. This is unlikely to have been forged, since for many years de Hooch's name was worth more than Vermeer's.

The little figures, somehow, still suggest de Hooch. They are well enough made not to spoil the artistic effect, but they are hardly as neat in *facture* as are most of Vermeer's figures.

An interesting suggestion in regard to the identity of the house in this picture has been made by Dr. Clifford Dobell, in his "Antony van Leeuwenhoek and His 'Little Animals.'"

In the course of his book, Dr. Dobell presents translations of van Leeuwenhoek's letters to the Royal Society, London. In the longest and in some respects most interesting letter, dated "Delft in Holland, 9th October, 1676," he describes how he looked through his "microscopes" at a drop of rain-water and what he saw there, thus producing the first paper ever prepared on protozoology, "the first account ever written," says Dr. Dobell, "of the Bacteria, as well as many other original observations." Van Leeuwenhoek wrote the letter from the notes he had made on his observations on various earlier dates, and, describing his study of rain-water on June 9, he interpolates this paragraph about the "closet" where he made his studies: "My closet standeth towards the northeast and is partitioned off from my antechamber with pine-wood, very close jointed, having no

other opening than a slit an inch and a half high and 8 inches long, through which the wooden spring of my lathe passeth. 'Tis furnished towards the street with four windows, whereof the two lowermost can be opened from within, and which by night are closed outside with two wooden shutters; so that little or no air comes in from without, unless it chance that in making my observations I use a candle, when I draw up one casement a little, lest the candle inconvenience me; and I also then pull a curtain almost right across the panels."

Dr. Dobell surmises that this description indicates that the "closet" was at the front, looking on to the canal in the Hippolytusbuurt. It was on this street, which ran parallel to the Oude Delft (the main canal and thoroughfare of the town) that van Leeuwenhoek, about 1654 — the year of the great powder-magazine explosion — bought a house and shop and set up in business as a draper. The house was within the sight of the Old Church and the New Church, and not far from the Fish and Meat Markets and the Town Hall. It is no longer standing but has been ascertained by the late Mr. L. G. N. Bouricius to have been the second house from the Nieuwstraat, which connects Hippolytusbuurt with Oude Delft. Here van Leeuwenhoek lived during the last sixty-seven years of his long life and undoubtedly it was here that he made most of his discoveries.

Dr. Dobell offers the interesting suggestion that the house shown in Vermeer's *Little Street in Delft* may conceivably have been van Leeuwenhoek's own house, for, as a glance at the picture will show, here we have a house with four windows, with two wooden shutters over the lowermost, just as in van Leeuwenhoek's description of his "closet."

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL
Arenberg Collection, Brussels

PLATE 41

Head and bust.

A young girl, the head in three-quarters, looks over her left shoulder at the spectator. A yellowish drapery falls back of the head; the body is enveloped in a white shawl and there is a pearl in the visible ear. The background is dark.

Signed, upper left corner: "I Meer" (the I set into the V-shaped centre of the M).

Canvas, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Believed to be No. 39, 1696 sale. It has somewhat the same pose and arrangement as the *Head of a Young Girl*, The Hague. Possibly the two pictures are portraits of Vermeer's daughters. This may be the one sold to Dr. Luchtmans, Rotterdam, 1816, for 3 florins (\$1.20); Duke of Arenberg, Brussels.

The Arenberg head is hardly as fine as the one at The Hague. Its modeling lacks firmness and the paint quality is unattractive. While it is good in light and shade it is less remarkable than is the other in this respect.

Enthusiasts have compared the Arenberg head with Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. Outstanding as its excellences are the painting does not merit this comparison. It is true, however, that both this and the head at The Hague are painted with a subtlety of modeling quite beyond anything else done in Holland, with resultant intensity of expression that is almost mystical.

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PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN

Royal Museum of Art, Brussels

Attributed by some critics to Jan Vermeer of Delft; now generally attributed to Nicolaes Maes

PLATE 42

A young man, seated, his right hand resting on the back of his chair, looks in full face towards the spectator. He is garbed in black, with plain white collar from which a small gold ornament depends. He has a large black hat, high-crowned. He sits in a lion-headed chair, holding his gloves in his hand.

Canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Collections: Peter Norton, London, 1836; T. Humphry Ward, London, 1888; E. Otlet, Brussels. Sold at Paris, 1900, to the Brussels Museum for 19,700 francs as a Nicolaes Maes. It was given, in Smith's "Catalogue Raisonné," 1836 — the work of which Dr. Hofstede de Groot's "Catalogue of Dutch Painters," 1907, is a revision — as a Rembrandt (No. 305), signed and dated 1644. Signature and date were later removed as false. Dr. de Groot definitely assigns it to Maes (No. 309). Mr. Eduard Plietzsch considers that it closely resembles the work of Vermeer of Delft but is not by him. Dr. Bredius ascribes it to Jan Victors. In the Exhibition of Dutch Art, Burlington House, 1929, it is assigned to "Nicolaes Maes or Johannes Vermeer."

Mr. A. J. Wauters, writing from the Brussels Museum for the *Burlington Magazine* in December, 1905, brings up several arguments to support his belief that this work is a Vermeer. He relates that when it first came to the Brussels Museum it was provisionally classed among anonymous works, but that M. Cardon suggested the name of Vermeer of Delft. Compari-

son with paintings by Vermeer and Maes strengthened the Brussels authorities' belief in the attribution to Vermeer. The particular mode of painting the lion-headed chair, thought by Mr. Wauters to be peculiar to Vermeer, is regarded by him as "almost equivalent to a signature." Chairs of this type, according to Mr. Wauters, do not appear in the works of Pieter de Hooch and Nicolaes Maes. Yet, as a matter of fact, one may see one of these self-same lion-headed chairs in the painting, *Boy with Pomegranates*, by de Hooch in the Wallace Collection. If the appearance of the chair in the portrait at Brussels is important, therefore, it must be because, as Mr. Wauters asserts, "it shows his [Vermeer's] peculiar technique and his little touches of high light." See Plate 43.

Although Dr. Bredius, Dr. Hofstede de Groot and Dr. W. R. Valentiner do not, any of them, accept the Brussels portrait as by Vermeer, certain things in its making cause one still to wonder if his hand may not be seen in it. There are points of resemblance between its *facture* and that of the *Letter*, Dresden, the *Cup of Wine*, Berlin, and the *Portrait of a Woman*, Buda-Pesth. It is true that, so far as one remembers, Vermeer never "lost" an edge as the edge of the hat in this picture is lost in the background. The hand, too, is not painted at all as the hand, let us say, of the *Lace Maker*, in the Louvre, is made.



THE LACE MAKER

The Louvre, Paris

PLATE 44

Making lace on a blue pillow and frame a young woman, her head in three-quarters, leans forward. To her right, at the left of the composition, is a blue pillow box from which straggle

strands of white and red silk. A book lies near by. The table is covered with tapestry. The girl, whose hair is coiffed after an antique style with lovelocks flowing confusedly from it, wears a yellow bodice with collar of white lace. The background is a wall of Vermeer grey. The light comes from the spectator's right.

Signed in the upper right side: "I Meer" (the I set into the V-shaped centre of the M).

Canvas, 9½ inches by 8 inches.

This is probably the *Girl Making Lace* of the 1696 sale, No. 12, 28 florins. Sales: Jacob Crammer Simonsz, Amsterdam, November 25, 1778, No. 17, 150 florins (Nijman); J. Schepens, Amsterdam, January 21, 1811, No. 5; H. Muilman, Amsterdam, April 12, 1813, No. 97; Amsterdam, May 24, 1815, 9 florins (Gruyter); Baron van Nagell van Ampsen, The Hague, September 5, 1851, No. 40, 260 florins (Lamme); D. Vis Blokhuyzen of Rotterdam, sale at Paris, April 1, 1870, 7270 francs; purchased, 1870, by the Louvre.

This little painting has long delighted earnest students of art at Paris. In the 1880's, when Vermeer was not yet well known to the general public, the *Lace Maker* had qualities which appealed to the intelligent youth of the ateliers. Its marked square touch technique and its cool colouration accorded better with the ideas of the time than did some of the hot-toned Dutch pictures in the Louvre.

It still impresses the present writer as one of the most characteristic of Vermeer's works, even though in size and composition it differs from most of the others. While the arrangement is satisfactory, it is not compellingly interesting in design.

The colour scheme is quite typical of Vermeer. It may be noted that Dr. Hofstede de Groot describes the dark blue cushion as having "white and red feathers protruding from it." To one who has known the picture since art student days it seems certain that these forms are strands of silk issuing from the pillow box.

Mr. H. Granville Fell, in his "Vermeer," thus characterises this little picture: "So finely designed, and so broad in effect as to convey an impression of much larger scale."

Dr. W. R. Valentiner considers that this was painted at the same time as the *Studio*, Czernin Collection, probably in 1664.



THE ASTRONOMER

Rothschild Collection, Paris

PLATE 45

Touching with his right hand a celestial globe which stands near the window, left, a man, leaning forward, sits at the right of the canvas. A book lies open before him, and his left hand holds a corner of the table. He has long, flowing hair and wears a blue gown. The table is covered with crumpled blue-green tapestry, having a yellow figure; the grey wall is partly obscured by a cabinet on which hangs a square. There are books on the top of this cabinet; to its right is a black-framed picture, its subject *The Finding of Moses*; the back of a nude woman and two other figures are seen in it. The same picture appears also in *The Love Letter* of the Beit Collection. A coat-of-arms, only part of which is visible, is inserted in the window.

Canvas, 20 inches by 18 inches.

For the possible early history of this painting and two others with a similar subject, the reader is referred to the discussion of

the possible early history of *The Geographer*, in the Collection of E. John Magnin, New York, page 124. The later history of the Rothschild *Astronomer* follows: Jan Gildemeester Jansz, Amsterdam, June 11, 1800, No. 139, 340 florins (Labouchère); sold at Christie's, London, 1863. Collection of Baron Alphonse de Rothschild, Paris; Baron E. de Rothschild.

For a discussion of the speculation as to the subject of the three Vermeer *Astronomers* or *Geographers*, the reader is referred to the description of the Frankfort *Astronomer* on page 197.



THE PEARL NECKLACE

Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin

PLATE 9

Her hands toying with a pearl necklace a young woman stands in profile well to the right of the picture, looking into a small mirror on the wall at the extreme left. She wears a yellow jacket trimmed with ermine and a greenish-grey skirt; a knot of red ribbon adorns her hair, and a large pendant hangs from her ear. Somewhat in front of her, to the left, is a table on which are discerned a large blue oriental vase, a tumbled mass of blue drapery, a small bowl of nondescript colour and a round brush. Behind the table is a chair, upholstered in greenish blue, with designs in dull yellow and blue. Another chair, apparently covered with brown Spanish leather, with brass bossed nails, occupies the immediate foreground, extreme right. The light is from a leaded casement, left; beyond the window is a curtain of Vermeer yellow. The wall is gradated, left to right, from a yellow-white to a blue-grey tone.

Signed on the table: "I Meer" (the I set into, and connected with, the V-shaped centre of the M).

Canvas, 22 inches by 18 inches.

This is probably the *Lady Adorning Herself*, 1696 sale, No. 36, 30 florins (\$12). Sales: J. Caudri, Amsterdam, September 6, 1809, No. 42, 55 florins (Spaan); D. Teengs, Amsterdam, April 24, 1811, No. 73, 36 florins (Gruyter); collections of Henry Crevedon; of M. Thoré, Paris, 1860; Suermondt Collection, Aix-la-Chapelle, 1874.

This is one of the few all but faultless pictures, its artistry well-nigh concealed. It appears not to have been painted at all but to have "just happened." It has extraordinary bits of rendering — as, for instance, the jug at the left against the window — but one is almost unconscious of the skilful handling. The high lights on this vase are a reminder of a saying of Alfred Stevens to the effect that a high light on pottery made by a Netherland master is more than a clever touch — it is a conscious act of intellect.

Vermeer came nearer in the *Pearl Necklace* than in any other work to making what the so-called "man in the street" would call a pretty face. The head is of a typical woman of Holland; the type, however, seems to have been modified in the direction of delicacy. The nose is not so *retroussé*, the chin not so retreating, as in some of Vermeer's other women. The arm, though hardly drawn constructively, is well enough seen and makes an agreeable form. The large pearl pendant, which Vermeer loved to paint, is exquisitely made, and the red ribbon gives a most agreeable colour accent.

Regarding this painting, Mr. E. V. Lucas, in "A Wanderer among Pictures," has thus written; "After the *Head of a Girl* at the Mauritshuis, and the *View of Delft*, it is, I think, Vermeer's most enchanting work. The white wall in the painting is beautiful beyond the power of words to express. It is so won-

derful that if one were to cut out a few square inches of this wall alone and frame it, one would have a joy forever."



A GIRL DRINKING WITH A GENTLEMAN

Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin

PLATE 46

Drinking from a wine cup held in her right hand, her left hand resting in her lap, a young woman, in red gown and white cap, sits in profile towards the right of the picture. A man, standing somewhat behind, regards her. He is clad in grey, with a black hat. In his right hand he holds the often depicted white jug. The table, covered with an oriental rug, bears books; near this, in front, stands a lion-headed chair, on which are a cushion and a guitar.

A window, of coloured glass, is, as is usual with Vermeer, at the extreme left. Its design corresponds with that of the Brunswick *Coquette* (q.v.), and somewhat resembles that of the Beit Collection *Love Letter*. Below the window is a bench, having a cushion at the farther end; behind the man's figure, to the left, a landscape, which has been conjectured by Mr. Plietzsch to be one of the works of Allaert van Everdingen.

Canvas, 26½ inches by 30½ inches.

Sale: Jan van Loon, Delft, July 18, 1736, No. 16, 52 florins. In the collection of Lord Francis Pelham Clinton Hope, London, sometime owner of the famous Hope diamond and at present (1936) Duke of Newcastle, in succession (1928) to his brother, the seventh duke. In the 1891 catalogue of the Hope Collection, this picture was No. 54. In 1898, the Hope Collection was bought *en bloc* by P. and D. Colnaghi and

A. Wertheimer, from whom the Vermeer picture was bought by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in 1901.

As an "intermediate Vermeer," one standing in quality between the dozen very great works of the master and those attributed to him which are decidedly less meritorious, this canvas elicits the thought that if there were nothing else from Vermeer's hand it would be regarded as a great painting. Though evidently by him it has its weak passages. In it are familiar objects: the lions' heads, the white vase of distinctive shape, the rug on the table, the tessellated floor. The drapery, especially on the man's figure, is not particularly good. Vermeer probably, as often, had difficulty in rendering forms that would not stay still. The woman's kerchief is less skilful than that of the *Young Woman at the Casement*, Metropolitan Museum. There are matchless things in the painting, nevertheless, of which only Vermeer was capable: the light coming through the curtain of the farther casement; the adequate making of the lions' heads; the head of the guitar and the rug on the table. These little felicities are not unimportant; their sum total imparts the air of exquisite serenity which is Vermeer's chief charm.

In his chronology of Vermeer's paintings Dr. Valentiner places this picture, together with the *Girl with the Wine Glass*, Brunswick, and the *Frick Music Lesson*, as painted in 1658.



THE COQUETTE

also called *The Girl with the Wine Glass*

Ducal Gallery of Paintings, Brunswick

PLATE 47

Holding a glass of wine, which a low-bending beau has just presented to her, a girl, smiling, sits in profile to the right of

the canvas. Her left hand is in her lap. At a table, towards the left and in the rear, is a gloomy gallant, his head on his hand.

The girl wears a rose-coloured bodice; the short sleeves, of yellow shot with gold, have lace at the elbows. The very full skirt is of roseate satin. The bending beau has a mouse-coloured cloak edged with gold; his long hair flows to his shoulders over a white collar, and his wrists are adorned with laces. The man in the corner is in military habit, his greenish-grey sleeves shot with gold.

On the table, its large white napkin falling over a blue cover, is a silver salver containing lemons, the peel of one of which falls to the table. Vermeer's little white jug is here.

The half-open casement, the stained glass of which depicts a woman holding a snake, admits a discreet light. On it is a coat-of-arms similar to the one in *A Girl Drinking with a Gentleman*, Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin. A description of the heraldry of this coat-of-arms is thus set forth by Dr. Hofstede de Groot in his "Catalogue of Dutch Painters": "It is per pale; the dexter, or, a chevron gules, with nine small lozenges sable in two rows above, and six of the same in three rows below; the sinister, on a chief vert three martlets; the crest is a woman holding a snake in her left hand." This coat-of-arms has been identified as that of the family of Moses Jans van Nederveen (1566-1624). On the wall, of Vermeer grey, is a large portrait of a man in black, with white collar and cuffs, holding a Rembrandtesque hat in his right hand. The floor is tiled in blue and white.

The blue tone of the underpainting shows through in several places, especially in the flesh and in the passages of white.

Signed below the window: "J Meer" (the J and M intertwined).

Canvas, 31 inches by 27 inches.

Possibly *Interior with Revellers*, 1696 sale. Catalogued by Eberlein so lately as 1859, "Jacob Vandermeer." Formerly in the ancient gallery of Salzthal (or Salzdahlum), formed by the Dukes of Brunswick.

This painting can hardly be called one of Vermeer's best, though it has admirable bits. The girl's head, which naturally is in the focus of the picture, shows unfortunately by no means the best rendering. The mouth is insensitively done and the edge of the shadow on the nose is badly studied. The gallant's head near by is dismally weak. The girl's hand, which rests in her lap, is delightfully rendered as it shows against the white napkin. One again is impressed that Vermeer, when he could get a thing to lie still, as this hand must have lain, was able to see it more beautifully and render it more absolutely than any other man who has painted.

The girl's satin skirt is handsomely made; it seemingly must have been arranged on a lay figure. The still life is treated in masterly fashion. Fine *morceaux* are the bit of shirt on the seated man's arm, the lace chemise about the girl's wrist, and the girl's sleeve with its gold thread well handled.

An interesting circumstance is that this work is built up on a rose-coloured tonality, whereas most of Vermeer's paintings are essentially studies in blue and yellow.

Mr. James Henry Duveen, in his "Art Treasures and Intrigue" (1935) says: "Duveen Brothers made an offer of nearly £150,000 not long ago to the government of Brunswick for Vermeer's *La Coquette* in the museum of Brunswick."

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THE COURTESAN

also called *The Procureess*; sometimes known as
Scene in a Tavern and as *A Young Woman in a*
Yellow Jacket

State Picture Gallery, Dresden

PLATE 48

A white-capped young courtesan, wearing a canary-yellow bodice, sits at a table to the right of the canvas, her head in three-quarters. Her left hand holds a wine glass while her right hand is extended to catch a gold piece, dropped into it by a youth who stands over her, his left hand resting on her shoulder. This young man, whose face and flowing locks are shaded by a grey felt hat with peacock feather, wears a red tunic adorned with a gold stripe. Against his right shoulder leans a crone, the procureess, garbed in black, who regards him and the girl closely.

At the extreme left sits a gallant, his head turned towards the spectator. He holds a glass of wine in his left hand and in his right hand a lute. This man wears a black *pourpoint* slashed with white, and has a large white collar with modish edging. A big cap or *beret* shades his face and fluffy chestnut hair. The background, for the most part grey, changes sharply into an orange-yellow behind the man with the wine glass.

Covering the table and dependent from it is a large rug, perhaps Turkish, with a pattern of red and yellow on a grey-green ground. It is partly obscured by a fur cloak at the left. On the table beside the green hock glass is a blue and white wine jug.

Signed, in the lower right corner: "J v Meer" (the J and M intertwined), and dated 1656.

Canvas, 57 inches by 52 inches.

Brought to Dresden, 1741, from the Wallenstein Collection at Dux, in Bohemia, where it had been in the castle of the Wallensteins, the family of the famous commander of the Imperial forces in the Thirty Years' War (assassinated, 1634), who was the subject of Schiller's drama, "Wallenstein." The celebrated adventurer Casanova (1725-98) was librarian of the castle from 1785 until his death and there wrote his widely read memoirs. This collection at Dux, consisting of 268 pictures, was acquired *en bloc* by the Dresden Gallery in 1741 for 22,000 florins. Catalogued as by Jan Vermeer since 1835, but attributed, until 1862, to Jan Vermeer of Utrecht.

The Procuress has historic interest in that, as it has generally been believed, it is one of the earliest of Vermeer's canvases. Careful examination of the workmanship reveals that it was painted by a man who did not, as yet, have his *metier* at his fingers' ends. It is made rather unevenly, with a heavy and unrelenting hand; it is not so highly finished or of so pleasant a surface as are some of the later Vermeers. The subject, of course, is not delectable, but aside from that the composition is not designed with complete or satisfying beauty. The figures appear to be jumbled together.

Certain parts of the still life, presumably, went wonderfully well, whereas other bits were loaded quite heavily because the artist painted and repainted them. The girl's yellow jacket is an instance of a passage in which the paint is "gobbed" on, in studio argot, very plentifully. The hock glass, on the contrary, which she holds in her left hand, is done with as great skill as Vermeer ever displayed.

Each of the heads is good in its own way: the girl's, of the unthinking type of Continental *fille de joie*; the old woman's,

with her sharp, uncanny features; the well-characterized countenances of the two gallants. These latter are among the few cases in which Vermeer has painted heads so deeply involved in shadow. The left hand of the boor leaning over the girl is singularly ill made as compared with the masterful bits near it.

This is one of two known canvases given to Vermeer in which the artist painted life-size figures. He may later have satisfied himself that he achieved better results by working on a smaller scale. He likewise learned, evidently, not to load his paintings as in this one. The colour of *The Procuress* should be thought rather terrible; if one were told in words of such an arrangement of colour tones one would condemn it offhand. Yet, in the actual painting, and in the reproduction, it proves agreeable and original.



A GIRL READING A LETTER

State Picture Gallery, Dresden

PLATE 10

Looking down at a letter which she holds in both hands a girl in greenish-yellow bodice stands in profile, facing a window at the left. Her hair is coiffured rather intricately with a love-lock falling to the shoulder. Before her is a table, over which is a partly crumpled rug, of red, yellow and blue. A dish, tipping to the right, holds fruits, some of which have rolled upon the table.

In the casement window of leaded glass the girl's head is reflected, rather too large. A drapery, hanging from the wall on the right, covers the top of the casement. In a corner below stands a lion-headed chair. In the extreme foreground, right,

filling more than one-fourth of the picture, hangs a drapery of bronze-green silk.

In the background to the right behind the girl is a trace of the signature: "Meer."

Canvas, 33 inches by 25½ inches.

Bought from Paris by de Brais, 1742, for the Royal Gallery, Dresden, a year after the purchase of *The Procureess* and twelve years before the purchase of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* for the same gallery. The Dresden inventories successively described it as in Rembrandt's manner, as a Rembrandt, and as a Pieter de Hooch. It was engraved in 1783 as a Flinck. Catalogued as by J. Vermeer since 1862.

This is one of the most beautiful and original of Vermeer's arrangements, somewhat resembling the *Pearl Necklace*, Kaiser Friedrich Museum, and the *Reader*, Rijks Museum. It is unique, in his *œuvre*, in respect of the extent of wall space above the figure. This compositional device, of course, is frequently used in present-day painting.

In his treatment of the reading woman's head and hands, Vermeer seems to have broken through his rather blocky square-touch brushwork, rendering these elements with more intensity and sympathy than was his wont. The hands, especially, while not entirely successful, have been studied with reference to their construction, with evident effort to register the delicate modulations over the small bones of the carpus.

The device of the reflection is charming, and perhaps original with the artist, who has made the head somewhat distorted as it would appear when reflected in two or three different panes. The forehead at the left in the reflection does not seem

about to meet the top of the head, and the outline of the cheek does not quite fit with the chin.

The long drapery at the right, with its play of light and shade, has been rendered exquisitely; the curtain over the window, on the other hand, strikes a painter as rather foolish. It may be that Vermeer could not keep this still enough.

In colour the painting is not of Vermeer's best. It is rather low in tone, a fact which may explain why it was at one time attributed to Rembrandt and again to Govaert Flinck. It lacks *la peinture blonde*, characteristic of so much of Vermeer's work.



THE ASTRONOMER

Städel Art Institute, Frankfurt

PLATE 49

Holding a pair of compasses in his left hand and surveying a white map of the stars on a table, a young man, left, leans forward, facing in three-quarters towards the left. His right hand rests on a book. He wears a bluish gown with orange lining; long curls fall to his shoulders. The table is nearly covered with a crumpled rug. The light, falling on the youth's right shoulder, is from a window, leaded in quaint design, and partly obscured by a large curtain, extreme left. Just behind the astronomer is a wooden cabinet bearing a globe and some books. To the right of this hangs a framed map, beneath which is a chair upholstered in tapestry. In the extreme foreground, right, is a square stool behind which, on the floor, lie some papers.

Signed, upper right panel of cupboard door: "I Meer" (the I set into, and connected with, the V-shaped centre of the M). On the wall, upper right hand corner, are another signature and

also a date: "I Ver-Meer MDCLXVIII." This signature, with date, on the authority of the catalogue of the Städel Art Institute, is not genuine. A complete discussion of the case of this second signature is in the Frankfort Catalogue, pp. 358-9.

Canvas, 21 inches by 18½ inches.

For the possible early history of this painting and two others with a similar subject, the reader is referred to the discussion of the possible early history of *The Geographer*, in the Collection of E. John Magnin, New York, page 125. The later history of the Frankfort *Astronomer* follows: Jonkheer J. Goll van Franckenstein, Amsterdam, July 1, 1833, No. 47, 195 florins (Nieuwenhuys); in the Dumont Collection, Cambrai, 1860 catalogue; Isaac Péreire, Paris, March 6, 1872, No. 132, 7200 francs; in the collection of Max Kann, Paris; collection of the Princess Demidoff of San Donato at Pratoleno near Florence, March 15, 1880, No. 1124; Ad. Joseph Bösch, Vienna, April 28, 1885, No. 32; in the possession of Ch. Sedelmeyer, Paris; and bought in 1885 by the Frankfort Art Association for the Städel Art Institute.

This picture, and the other similar pictures by our artist, have by some writers been thought to be a portrait of Anthony van Leeuwenhoek who, as we have already seen, was notable as a scientist as well as trustee of Vermeer's estate. Van Leeuwenhoek was also not only a draper by trade but wine-gauger and chamberlain to the Sheriffs of Delft, who as we have noted were the officials from whom came his appointment as trustee. In 1669, as Dr. Clifford Dobell records, van Leeuwenhoek had still further demonstrated his versatility by obtaining an appointment as a surveyor.

Dr. Dobell says of the *Astronomer* and *Geographer* portraits: "There is no authentic record of any portrait of Leeuwenhoek

having ever been painted by this great master." Of these portraits, Dr. Dobell goes on to say: "They appear to me to portray different people. No two are alike, and none bears any recognizable likeness to Leeuwenhoek, as we know him from Verkolje's authentic portraits. . . . The very fine painting by Vermeer at Frankfort shows a man poring over a map or chart, and with a pair of compasses in his right hand. Behind his head there is a globe, and some other maps are also in the picture — a couple loose on the floor, one framed on the wall. . . . The globe in the picture is apparently a *celestial* (not terrestrial) globe and is very like that shown in both of Verkolje's portraits. Leeuwenhoek must surely have possessed a similar one. In Verkolje's oil-painting, furthermore, Leeuwenhoek is shown holding a pair of compasses in his right hand — just like Vermeer's *Geographer* (*Astronomer*). The framed map on the wall has only an artistic import: it has no 'scientific' significance, being simply a decoration — introduced into many of Vermeer's other pictures which have no connexion with geography.

"There is no authority for calling this picture *The Geographer* (*The Astronomer*) — a modern label. Suppose we call it *The Surveyor*? This title seems equally appropriate; and we might then suppose that Vermeer was inspired to paint it by seeing Leeuwenhoek at work on ground-plans and surveys in preparation for his qualifying examination in 1669! But all this is mere guesswork, though the coincidences just noted are curious — if nothing more. The *Geographer* himself is not much like Leeuwenhoek; and there is no evidence, as I have already remarked, that Vermeer ever painted his portrait."

Because of its lack of the complete perfection of technique of which Vermeer was capable this picture has been placed by some critics among his early works, contemporary with the

Milkwoman. The edges are hard and not well understood. While the head has admirable qualities its outline against the dresser is not very good. The *pointillé* facture of the rug should be noted. Vermeer seems to have used this dot stroke in emergencies all through his career. The *Astronomer* contains nothing of his square-touch technique which was, apparently, a late development.



A PAINTER'S STUDIO

sometimes called *Portrait of the Artist*

Collection of Count Czernin, Vienna

PLATE 50

A seated painter, his back to the spectator, is at work, in the foreground somewhat to the right of the canvas, on a picture the subject of which he has sketched in chalk.

The man wears a doublet with strips of black cloth over white. He has short trousers, quite loose, and red hose, over which are pulled a pair of loosely fitting white stockings. He wears low shoes. On his head is a flat cap, or *beret*, of velvet. His right hand, which holds a brush, rests on a mahlstick. He is painting a bit of the model's wreath in a bluish tone.

The model, apparently a figure of Renown, stands facing to the left in three-quarters near the centre of the picture. She holds a trumpet in her left hand; in her right hand, a yellow book. She wears a bluish gaberdine with skirt of light colour. Behind her, covering much of the wall, is a large map of the Seventeen Provinces. At the top of the map is the description: "Nova XVII Provinciarum . . . descriptio . . . et accurata earundem . . . edit . . . per Nicolaum Piscatorem."

At the extreme right, in the immediate foreground, is a tapes-

try filling quite one-fourth of the picture.¹ Also in the foreground, lower right, is a chair with brass bosses, and behind this is a table bearing two books, one open and one standing on end, a work basket, certain draperies and, interestingly, a cast from the Brutus of Michelangelo. A brass chandelier hangs from the timbered ceiling; the floor is of black and white squares.

Signed on an inset forming part of the map, on a level with the girl's shoulder: "I Ver-Meer."

Canvas, 52 inches by 44 inches.

Prior to 1866 this painting was No. 75 in the Czernin Gallery catalogue and was attributed to Pieter de Hooch. Professor G. F. Waagen, Director of the Royal Gallery of Paintings in Berlin, writing in 1866 of the foremost art collections of Vienna, states that in 1860 he recognized in "this beautiful painting" a "major work of the admirable master" Vermeer. Waagen added that, along with a painting by Paul Potter, he regarded this as "the high spot of the whole collection." M. Thoré, in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1866, refers to a signature of Pieter de Hooch on the rung of the stool. This he believed to be old but spurious. He found the Vermeer signature, as above, on the map and reproduced it in his article.

Late in 1935, the picture being on loan to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, rumours were widespread that large offers for the picture, which has often been referred to as the most important picture by Vermeer still in private hands, had been made to Count Czernin.

¹ Called by several writers a Gobelins tapestry, which it could be, though the Gobelins factory had only recently been inaugurated, on June 1, 1662, and its products may not have been widely dispersed between then and Vermeer's death. The tapestry in this picture may well have been of local manufacture, since tapestry makers were recorded as members of the Guild of St. Luke in Delft and Vermeer's father was recorded as a textile worker.

The painting, after Vermeer's death, was in possession of his widow, Catharina Bolnes, who gave it to her mother as security for a loan.

It may not be an exaggeration to say that this painting is the supreme achievement of its kind. Its subject matter is not particularly interesting; it is, indeed, in some respects, almost absurd. The girl's figure is merely that of a model in a rather silly pose. This, nevertheless, is the one work by Vermeer the technique of which is practically flawless. The man's hand and possibly the hand of the girl holding the trumpet are the only bits in which one detects any faltering. It is a painting on which the artist worked for the unalloyed joy of rendering supremely well what he saw as he saw it. He was as one of whom it might be truly said that he

"Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They are! "

To literary critics of art and other laymen it may not be significant that Vermeer evidently found his happiness in perfect technique, but any competent painter understands that it is the expression of this joy of accomplishment which makes a work of art worth while, and here is a painting in which everything is well made — all that one can say of it critically is that some things in it are even better done than some other things.

Its most astonishing triumph, perhaps, is the rendering of the chandelier, intricate in detail, painted with the utmost simplicity and directness, with some parts brought out sharp and others blurred.

An insistence on rightness of edges persists throughout the design. In looking at the man's head observe where the hair blurs into the map on the light side, where the dark cap comes

sharp against the map where this is light, blurs a little where it comes darker, sharpens again where it comes against the light of the map and the easel.

The map, again, is a marvellous part of the picture. It is rendered in complete detail and yet it holds its place perfectly. The little pictures of towns are discerned, the little ships are drawn individually, the allegorical design in the corner and other minutiae are plain to be seen, and still the light slides across the map as simply and as naturally as on one of the bare walls which Vermeer loved to paint.

In colour this is the work by Vermeer which comes closest to the actual aspect of nature. It shows no forced tonality, nor is there in it anywhere the apparently accidental tone, the bluish or greenish note, that is observable in some of his other paintings. Its tone is that which nature always suggests, which is hardest to get and most beautiful when achieved. Such tonal success comes only from seeing and painting each colour value exactly right, trusting to no binding "sauce" to pull the thing together.

Some writers have thought that the artist depicted in the *Studio* is Vermeer himself. This supposition is obviously based on the wording of an entry in the 1696 sale catalogue, viz.: "3. 't Portrait van Vermeer in een Kamer met verscheyde bywerk ongemeen fraai van hem geschildert," which may be translated: "Portrait of Vermeer in a room, with various accessories uncommonly handsome, painted by him."

Another conjecture is that Pieter de Hooch posed for Vermeer in the *Studio*. Unfortunately for the probability of this surmise Vermeer was still a young man when de Hooch spent three or four years at Delft; the painting under consideration has a technical perfection belonging to Vermeer's latest years.

Still another conjecture is that a hired model posed for Vermeer.

Whether this is, or is not, a self-portrait, Vermeer's method of work, nevertheless, may very well be revealed by this painting. His artist has sketched in his subject with white chalk and is painting it touch by touch (*de premier coup* or *alla prima*) without having made any previous rub-in or *ébauche*. This, it is likely, was Vermeer's own mode of painting, for it is improbable that he took ironic satisfaction in depicting some friend who was working in a wrong way.

The perfection of a man's artistry seemingly should not militate against it. Yet something like this has happened to the *Studio*. It is probably the most nearly perfect of Vermeer's works, and its colour is in an admirable state of preservation. Because, however, the canvas lacks the bluish-grey tone characteristic of some of Vermeer's paintings it is rather out of favour with certain critics. Whatever their opinion of it, it is a marvellous production. It carries reality as far as even Vermeer ever carried it; and in its realism it is wholly artistic.

A perhaps pathetic circumstance is that the artist of this picture should be depicted as painting a figure of Renown. This goddess certainly passed Vermeer by for many years.



PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

Museum of Fine Arts, Buda-Pesth

PLATE 51

A woman, with folded hands, stands almost in full face. She wears a small cap and a large white collar decorated with a knot of yellow silk. Her gown is of dark blue with white cuffs. On her right hand is a glove decked out with yellow ribbons. Her

right hand holds a small fan. In the background, at the woman's left, is a table cover, reddish in hue, its pattern worked out in some detail. A chair is vaguely disclosed at her right.

Canvas, 32 ½ inches by 26 inches.

It was in the Esterházy Collection, Vienna, of 486 pictures which in 1865 was purchased *en bloc* by the Hungarian government for the National Picture Gallery, Buda-Pesth, for 1,300,000 florins. The collection thus begun was transferred, much augmented by other purchases through the intervening years, to the Museum of Fine Arts, Buda-Pesth, erected 1900–1906.

This painting, under the title of *Lady with Gloves and a Fan*, was, until the middle nineties of the last century, attributed to Rembrandt. It is hard to see why. The *facture*, the manner of attack and the colour are quite different from his. Much in it suggests Vermeer, the attribution to whom, originally made by Dr. A. Bredius, is now accepted by several writers, though others regard it as doubtful. The little bows are of the yellow which Vermeer loved and they are brushed in with the crisp square touch which he frequently used. The general tone is like his, as is the almost startling impression of lifelikeness which the work gives.



OTHER PAINTINGS SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTED TO VERMEER

Of the forty-seven pictures discussed in the foregoing pages certain pictures, though ably supported by one or more opinions which properly command respect, may still be regarded as not yet having fully “arrived” in the final list of completely accepted and authenticated works by our painter. They may be

said to be still "on probation," and that fact has been duly noted in the discussion of the individual pictures in question.

In general it may be said that attribution of paintings to Vermeer should be considered, if at all, in a spirit of cautious criticism, for belief that an old painting which conceivably might be by Vermeer must be by Vermeer is readily stimulated by the high valuations that have been placed upon the well-authenticated works of this master.

"To hear almost every year of a newly discovered Vermeer may cause suspicion," writes Dr. W. R. Valentiner, in an article on *The Smiling Girl*, in the Mellon Collection, in *Art in America* for April, 1928. "And indeed we can be sure that in the endeavor to discover unknown works by this rare master in recent times, paintings have often been associated with his name which cannot stand serious criticism. On the other hand it is still quite possible that for a number of years to come new Vermeers may now and then appear. But even then it would take some time before a complete list of the works of the artist would number fifty, which is after all a small enough output for a painter who worked at least twenty years.

"It seems that it should be an easy matter to recognize with certainty a work by Vermeer, so pronounced is his style, his manner of composition and his technique. With the exception of a few early works which show the influence of his master, Carel Fabritius, and through him of Rembrandt, there is scarcely a change in Vermeer's manner during the whole period of his maturity. The mistakes in attribution are usually, to my mind, due to the fact that those who are striving to discover new Vermeers persuade themselves, when they come upon paintings which have a faint resemblance either to the subject, composition, or technique of the master, that the artist might have once as an experiment gone aside from his usual path and developed in

other directions. But as a matter of fact he did not. If we go through his authenticated works we find that the relationship among these paintings refers not only to subject, but to composition and technique also, and that they are so close in all these elements that after one knows a few works by the master the others are much more easily recognized than is the case with almost any other great artist of the past. Very few of the great masters have been so limited in their imagination or at least have seemed to care so little for the subject they painted and concentrated so exclusively upon the quality of execution in colour and light effects. Vermeer used a very small number of models, and repeated certain details like costumes, curtains, pillows, windows, mantelpieces, and even the paintings hanging on the wall so often that newly discovered works by him frequently seem like puzzle pictures composed of pieces taken from different groupings in known paintings by him."

Experience indicates that the number of pictures which from time to time will be attributed to Vermeer will be literally without end. No list of these attributions, therefore, can hope ever to be complete and final, and all that can be done in a compilation is to set down such information as is available at any given time in regard to pictures so attributed which are at that moment believed to be actually in existence.

There follow now brief descriptions of several of such existent paintings and drawings which by one authority or another have been attributed to Vermeer of Delft.

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, sometimes called *The Unjust Steward*. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, from the collection of Viscount Rothermere. This picture has been accepted as by Vermeer by Dr. Wilhelm von Bode, though, as Mr. H. Granville Fell, Editor of *The Connoisseur*, says in his

"Vermeer," "the supposition that it may be by Carel Fabritius is strong. It is solidly painted, full in colour, with a Rembrandtian effect of light and shade." It has also been attributed to another Rembrandt pupil, Samuel van Hoogstraten. Rembrandt, himself, painted a famous picture of this same subject which is in the Wallace Collection, London.

History: "N. N.," Berlin; Bottenwiesser (dealer), Berlin (in 1926); Viscount Rothermere, London; National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Mr. P. G. Konody, in his "Works of Art in the Collection of Viscount Rothermere," 1932, says of this picture: "Vermeer stands nearer to Rembrandt here than does any of his direct pupils." Mr. Konody gives a description of the colouration and the *chiaroscuro*, which, he believes, substantiates the attribution of the work to Vermeer. He classes it with "other youthful works" such as *Christ in the Home of Mary and Martha* and *The Toilette of Diana*.

An Officer at an Open Window. Published as "The 4000-Guinea 'Vermeer,'" in *The Illustrated London News*, June 3, 1922.

History: The picture, measuring 45 inches by 32 inches, was bought in 1863 by Dr. Walter Dickson; inherited by his son, Dr. T. H. Dickson, of Kingston-on-Thames; sold by his widow through Messrs. Robinson, Fisher and Harding at Willis's auction rooms, London, May 11, 1922, to Mr. Frank T. Sabin, of 172, New Bond Street, for 4000 guineas.

The subject is an officer seated at an open window holding a gun, with a lady playing the virginals in the background. The painter's signature is said to appear on the top right-hand corner of the instrument.

This painting, however, is considered by Dr. W. R. Valen-

tiner to be a work by Hendrik van der Burch, an interesting and heretofore little known artist, who in Dr. Valentiner's opinion painted several pictures which have been wrongly ascribed to Vermeer.

In a special section devoted to the work of van der Burch in his book on Pieter de Hooch, published in 1929 in the series *Klassiker der Kunst*, Dr. Valentiner prints a reproduction of this picture on page 243.

Portrait of a Girl. Collection of Mr. C. A. Boughton Knight, Duncton Castle, England. *Canvas*, 17 inches by 14½ inches. Exhibited at the Birmingham Exhibition of Midland Art Treasures, in the winter of 1934-35, directed by Mr. S. C. Kaines Smith, Keeper of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, who writes of the picture in *The Connoisseur* for January, 1935: "In technique, in quality and in feeling, I have no hesitation in claiming this work for Vermeer." Mr. Nikolaus Pevsner, on the other hand, writes, in *The Burlington Magazine* for January, 1935: "The *Portrait of a Girl*, being introduced as a new Vermeer, gave rise to much controversy. The picture is extremely pleasing, but I find myself unable to see Vermeer's hand in it. Kronig suggests Dujardin, which does not seem satisfactory either. I should like to plead for Sweerts, and Dr. H. Schneider, the Director of the Dutch Institute for the History of Art at The Hague, supports that attribution."

Mary Magdalene at the Foot of the Cross. Collection of Major F. H. Fawkes, Otley, England. Exhibited at the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, 1935, in the exhibition of paintings by Vermeer and other Dutch masters (No. 79a). The catalogue of this exhibition states that this picture is probably earlier than the signed work *Christ in the Home of Mary and Martha*. Exhibited at Manchester, England, 1934.

Canvas, 60 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches by 54 inches.

M. Jean Decoen, in *The Burlington Magazine* for September, 1935, writing of the Boymans Museum Exhibition, expresses the opinion that this is "a new example of Vermeer's Italianate period . . . certainly a Vermeer." Dr. Alfred Scharf, on the other hand, writing of the Exhibition in *The Connoisseur* for November, 1935, says: "It is surprising to find classed as an early work of Vermeer a picture of Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross, from the Collection of Major Fawkes at Otley. Neither in its feeling nor in its technique can I find any relation to Vermeer's work. On the contrary, the classicism of the whole pose, as well as the elegance of the handling, point to the brush of a French Caravaggist, to an artist of tenebrist tendencies such as Robert Tournier."

Still Life. In the possession of J. O. Kronig, of The Hague. It has been exhibited on loan at the Leyden Museum.

The principal object in this picture is a stoneware beer jug, partly white and partly light yellowish brown, with a pewter lid in which the studio window is reflected. It stands among some peeled chestnuts and chestnut shells, on a brown marble table, against a dark background.

Canvas, 20 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches by 17 $\frac{5}{16}$ inches.

This is a cleverly made painting. If one has no cogent reason to say that it is not by Vermeer, no strong reason appears for asserting that it is. Published, *Burlington Magazine*, October, 1920.

Some one has urged that the work should be attributed to Vermeer because a light object—the jug—is placed against a dark background. Yet, in many instances, Vermeer showed a preference for representing dark objects against a light background. More possibly conclusive are the touches of ultra-

marine in the high lights of the chestnut shells; these evince a feeling for colour value uncommon in the Holland of Vermeer's day, except in his own paintings. Other portions of the canvas reveal qualities usually associated with Vermeer's technique. The marble table is painted much as are the clavichords, grained to look like marble in several of his paintings. The reflection of the studio window on the lid has something of Vermeer's careful observation and close rendering. The arrangement is not particularly exciting; if, indeed, it is by Vermeer the painting of the marble, so like his marbled clavichords, dates it as made, probably, towards the end of his life.

That Vermeer sometimes painted still-life pictures without figures may possibly be indicated by an entry in the Hoet Catalogue (Vol. I, p. 33) of a sale at Amsterdam, May 9, 1696: "19. Een stil leven van Vermeer, 4—5." This is not conclusive, however, for in almost every Vermeer entry in the Hoet Catalogue, we find that pictures now generally accepted as by "our" Vermeer are specifically stated to be by Vermeer, or van der Meer, of Delft, and there are several pictures ascribed simply to "Vermeer" which evidently are the work of one of the Vermeers of Haarlem.

Still Life. Marczell de Nemes Collection, Amsterdam.

A scarf of blue satin, reflecting the light, hangs from a casket, the latter standing on two books, bound in the Netherland fashion with strips of leather. In front are a jug of white Delft ware, apparently lying on its side, a melon and a glass tumbler. Over the edge of the latter hangs a bunch of white grapes. Before the foregoing objects is a plate, reddish, on which are a red peach, two apples, a pear and a bunch of black grapes.

Canvas, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 20 inches.

In the sale of Frederich Muller and Company, Amsterdam, Nov. 13-14, 1928. Sold for 21,000 guilder.

An able painting, rendered with skilful and adequate technique. The cool, meticulous care with which the various parts of it are made does, measurably, recall the miracle-maker of Delft. There is little or nothing in the *facture*, however, which bespeaks Vermeer.

Portrait of a Young Girl. Collection of D. G. van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Published as a Vermeer by Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot in his "Vermeer and Carel Fabritius," Supplement, 1930, No. 47. Earlier attributed to Gerard Terborch.

Canvas, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches by 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

This picture, in the opinion of Dr. W. R. Valentiner, is not by Vermeer.

The Girl with the Cat. A young girl with a cap and a brown jacket is petting a cat. She leans her hands on a wall.

Canvas, 22 inches by 18 inches.

E. Reulens Sale, Brussels, April 17, 1883, No. 284; in the possession of the dealer, Rothschild, 1930.

This picture is regarded by some critics as by Vermeer; by others as the work of some one of his followers. Dr. Valentiner does not believe it to be the work of Vermeer.

View of Delft with a Bleaching Ground in Front. Goudstikker Collection, Amsterdam. A view of Delft with small figures in the foreground.

Canvas, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Published as a Vermeer by Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot in his "Vermeer and Carel Fabritius," Supplement, 1930. On June 23, 1923, Mr. M. F. Hennus, in *De Amsterdammer Weekblad voor Nederland*, citing Dr. W. von Bode and Dr. de Groot as having

attributed the work to Vermeer, said: "With the discovery of this picture, which is a worthy companion piece to the *View of Delft* in the Mauritshuis, Messrs. Goudstikker in Amsterdam have certainly made one of the most important and thrilling artistic finds of the last few years." In 1930 Dr. W. R. Valentiner wrote: "I am sure that the large landscape of Delft belonging to Goudstikker in Amsterdam is not by the artist [Vermeer] and cannot in any way be compared to the great work at The Hague." It has also been attributed to one of the Vermeers of Haarlem.

Conversation Piece. Private Collection, the Netherlands. Published by Dr. A. Bredius, *Burlington Magazine*, October, 1932. At the date of publication it was in the hands of the son of the former director of Goupil's Gallery, The Hague.

Canvas, 24¾ inches by 20 inches.

Lot and his Daughters. Hertz Collection, Hamburg. Attributed to Vermeer by Professor Willem Vogelsang, Director of the Kunstistor Institute, Utrecht. Mr. H. Granville Fell says of this painting: "There is nothing intrinsically characteristic of Vermeer to interest us in the picture." See next paragraph.

The Huntsman's Rest, in the Louvre, "wrongly attributed to Jan van der Meer," says Dr. W. R. Valentiner, in his book on Pieter de Hooch, "and the picture in the Hamburg Gallery which is related to it are probably by Ludolf de Jongh."

Study Head of a Boy. Royal Print Collection, Berlin.

A boy's head in full face; the light from the left. He wears a black felt hat and a broad white collar.

Painted in oil-colours on yellow-brown paper, 6⅜ inches by 7¾ inches.

Described in Dr. Hofstede de Groot's Catalogue, under 46b. Sale: Collection of drawings formed by G. Leembruggen, Amsterdam, March 5, 1866, No. 708 (Suermondt); Suermondt Collection, Aix-la-Chapelle.

It is hard to believe that this head is by Vermeer. It shows neither the square touch nor the small *pointillé* touch which he habitually used. The high lights on the lips are not in his manner. Compare with the *Head of a Girl*, the Hague Museum. The light and shade are not well understood. The edge of the shadow on the forehead is ill observed, the penumbra being of the same value as the shadow — a fault not committed by Vermeer. The reflected lights are exaggerated, and their edges are oversharper against the dark hat.

Portrait of a Young Woman. Collection of Jean Schmit. Published in *Apollo*, January, 1935, accompanied by an article by M. Paul Lambotte. Said to have been in the Collection of Count Berchtold, former Chancellor of Austria-Hungary, at Vienna, and prior to 1914 attributed to Vermeer by Dr. C. Hofstede de Groot. A half-effaced inscription on the reverse side has been read as "Helgand Jans van Vormer, aged twenty-seven in 1659." This inscription has led to certain easy and obvious suppositions.

The Physician. Stchavinsky Collection, Leningrad. Sale of P. V. Lelarova Collection, Petrograd, 1916. Catalogue of the V. A. Stchavinsky Collection, Petrograd, 1917, pages 35-36. Probably painted by Cornelis de Man.

DRAWINGS SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTED TO VERMEER

Several drawings have been by some critics ascribed to Vermeer.

Reproductions of three of these are published in "Vermeer van Delft," by Benno Reiffenberg and Wilhelm Hausenstein, Munich, 1924.

One, in the Städel Art Institute, Frankfort, $7\frac{7}{8}$ inches by $11\frac{1}{8}$ inches, shows essentially the same scene as the *View of Delft* at The Hague. Unless in subject it does not resemble Vermeer. Hardly suggestive of his broad, ample *chiaroscuro* is the "snappy," highly accented style in which the houses are drawn. A mass of foliage appears in the foreground which is not in the *View of Delft*, and a funny little man in a boat, pushing himself from the shore with a pole, is in the staccato manner of, say, Jacques Callot or some other technician of the picaresque period.

A drawing, in the Albertina, Vienna (1935) $7\frac{1}{8}$ inches by $12\frac{1}{8}$ inches, is a view of Delft from a different standpoint, depicting the high spire of the New Church. It is an attractive drawing, in the general style of many of Rembrandt's brilliant water colour sketches in monochrome. In almost every technical respect its manner is antithetical to Vermeer's.

A drawing, in the Albertina Museum, Vienna, Vienna (1935) $7\frac{1}{8}$ inches by $5\frac{1}{8}$ inches, delineates a boy, or possibly a woman, who leans on the back of a chair. A conspicuous defect is that the hands are too small. One sees no compelling reason to suppose it to be by Vermeer. It is made with broad monochrome washes, a method which Rembrandt and most of his pupils followed.

A red-chalk drawing showing a woman seated, full length, asleep, facing towards the spectator's left. Collection J. Q. van Regteren Altena, Amsterdam, was published in *Oud-Holland*, 1931.

PAINTINGS FORMERLY ATTRIBUTED TO VERMEER

Several other paintings which at one time and another have been attributed to Vermeer of Delft are now believed, on apparently good authority, not to be his. While there is a possibility that further study may reverse present opinion regarding some of the attributions suggested in Dr. H. de Groot's *Catalogue Raisonné*, the following is a list of works not to be accepted as by Vermeer unless new and convincing evidence for such authentication shall be presented:

Family Group, Czernin Collection. Is by Renesse (doubtless Constantin Adrian Renesse, etcher, c.1660, or J. Renesse, landscape painter, who may have been identical with the foregoing).

Soldiers at a Tavern, Borghese Gallery. By P. de Hooch (see 272 in H. de Groot's *Catalogue Raisonné* of de Hooch's works).

Card Players, No. 12, Angiot Sale, Paris, 1875. By de Hooch (see 264, H. de G.'s *Catalogue*).

Family in the Courtyard of a House, Vienna Academy. By de Hooch (see 321, H. de G.'s *Catalogue*).

Two Ladies and Two Gentlemen in an Interior, Havemeyer Collection, New York. By de Hooch (see 192, H. de G.'s *Catalogue*).

Music Lesson, Wallace Collection. By Jan Steen, c. 1626-1679 (see 412, H. de G.'s *Catalogue Raisonné* of Steen's works).

Woman Peeling Apples, Wallace Collection. By de Hooch (see 33, H. de G.'s *Catalogue*).

A Young Woman Peeling an Apple for Her Child. By Gerard Terborch, 1617-1681 (see also *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, which so attributes it).

Concert with Four Persons, Kurt Collection, Berlin. Offered, 1861, to the Brussels Museum as a de Hooch.

Sleeping Maid-Servant, No. 34, Thoré Sale, Paris, 1892. Believed to be not by Vermeer but by Esaias Boursse, c. 1630-c. 1672.

Old Woman Reading the Bible, Collection Adolphe Schoss, Paris. Signed by Jacobus Vrel.

"Among the painters who by the casual museum visitor are easily mistaken for Pieter de Hooch," Dr. W. R. Valentiner has written (*Art in America*, February, 1929), "the most fascinating is perhaps the mysterious Jacobus Vrel, mysterious because his name is known to us only through the signature on some of his paintings. No mention is made of him in old Dutch auction catalogues or documents. We have, in fact, no actual proof that he was a Dutchman. Although he is generally associated with the schools of Delft or of Amsterdam, he may equally well have been a native of one of the neighbouring countries — Friesland or the lower Rhineland.

"He is entirely preoccupied with problems of color and the values of light, and to this end he simplifies the arrangement of his compositions as far as possible. He seems extraordinarily modern in this respect, and we understand in a measure how Bürger-Thoré (1866), who re-discovered Vermeer, should have attributed several of Vrel's paintings to this great master with whom Vrel had in common a disregard of detail very rare in that day."

A Boy Blowing Soap Bubbles. Is by Esaias Boursse, c. 1630–c. 1672.

A Young Gentleman Writing a Letter. By Gabriel Metsu (see 185, H. de G.'s *Catalogue Raisonné* of works by Metsu).

So-called *Portrait of the Artist*, Thoré Collection, 1866; later in possession of M. Porgès, Paris. By Cornelis de Man, of Delft, 1621–1706.

Country House, Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin. By Dirck Jan van de Laan.

Vestibule of the St. Agatha Cloister, Rijks Museum. Probably by Emanuel de Witte, 1607–1692.

Interior of a Cloister, Thoré Collection. By J. Vrel.

A Nun Conversing with a Woman in the Street, Rijks Museum No. 2600. Signed J. Vrel. It was in the Thoré Collection, 1866; No. 33, Thoré Sale, Paris, 1892.

A Young Woman Sewing. At a window a woman sits sewing beside a table covered with a cloth on which is a beer jug. An open door shows another room hung with gilt leather. By Hendrik van der Burch, though in the Museum at Hanover it is catalogued under the name of Pieter de Hooch.

Canvas, 19 inches by 15 inches.

Sales: Amsterdam, 1779, according to M. Thoré; J. Pekstok, Amsterdam, 1792.

Interior of a Town, seen by Thoré in Hudtwalker Collection, Hamburg. By J. Vrel.

Pictures of a Town. Certainly not by Vermeer.

Landscapes. Certainly not by Vermeer of Delft but possibly by one of his namesakes of Haarlem.

Three still life pieces. Not by Vermeer; one in the Hermitage, Leningrad, is certainly by Melchior d' Hondekoeter, 1636-1695.

Various paintings which M. Thoré himself only very doubtfully asserted to be by Vermeer.

A Family Group. National Gallery, London. The left half was formerly attributed as *The Lesson* to Vermeer, but the National Gallery catalogue has for many years attributed the entire picture to Michael Sweerts (1615-20 — after 1656). This painting has had an interesting recent history. At some unknown date it was cut in two and the left half presented to the National Gallery by C. Fairfax Murray, 1900. In the Gallery catalogue for 1910 it was ascribed to Vermeer. In that year, however, the right half was purchased from M. Flersheim, Paris, as *A Family Group* by Sweerts. The two pictures were joined in 1915, the ascription to Vermeer having been abandoned. While the separate left half of the *Family Group* was still supposed to be a Vermeer it was thus described in "A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery," by E. T. Cook, who quotes M. H. Witt, in the *Nineteenth Century* for October, 1900, as follows: "A symphony in black and white; cool in effect, almost to the point of austerity and chilliness. The faces are full of expression. The master turns in expectation to the pupil, as much as to say 'Come, don't you know?' The pupil is ready with his answer, and seems to appeal for encouragement: 'That is right, is it not?' There is a severe absence of details; everything in the picture is made to contribute to the colour scheme. 'The play of cool light on the faces and hands, on the man's black dress, and the gray tablecloth with its patches of blue shadow; the design of the man's large hat against the dark background, the almost pathetic charm of the fair-haired boy's expression, the

regular black and white of the tiled floor, — all seem chosen for their pictorial value alone and skilfully composed into this grave, almost austere harmony. The largeness of design and rejection of all superfluous detail in this picture connect it with Vermeer's more daring compositions." Mr. Cook adds: "Only one life-size group by the master is certainly authenticated, the signed *Courtesan* at Dresden. The attribution of our picture to the master is uncertain." See Plate 53.

Dr. Valentiner, in *The Pantheon* for July, 1932, writes of this painting: "The attribution to Michael Sweerts is by no means satisfactory. Sweerts is much more exact in his drawing, applies stronger light contrasts, reveals in the rusty, red-brown shadow tones (here entirely missing) his connection with the Caravaggio school, and has, as far as is known, never painted large pictures. It is besides most questionable whether at the time when this painting originated he was still alive; we last hear of him in 1665."

From internal evidence and comparison with known portraits of a similar subject by Leendert van der Cooghen, Dr. Valentiner considers the assumption probable that the picture is really the work of van der Cooghen and portrays van der Cooghen's close friend the artist Vincent Laurens van der Vinne and family, painted at about 1667.

Diana and Her Nymphs. Sackville Gallery, London. Once attributed to Vermeer but attribution later withdrawn by the Sackville Gallery.

Girl Pouring Wine. At Sackville Gallery, London, and attributed tentatively to Vermeer by C. J. Holmes, *Burlington Magazine*, July, 1909. Attribution later abandoned by the Sackville Gallery.

Portrait of the Artist. French private collection. Attributed by C. J. Holmes, *Burlington Magazine*, July, 1909, to Vermeer. Attribution later abandoned by the Sackville Gallery, which had exhibited it.

A Picture of a Street. In front of an old house a girl converses with an elderly woman, the latter reclining at a window. Through a doorway the street is seen. By Jacobus Vrel.

Panel.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1828.

Procession at the Gateway of Leyden University on Degree Day. By Hendrik van der Burch.

Canvas, 29 inches by 24 inches.

Sale: P. van Romondt, Amsterdam, 1833.

A Gentleman and a Lady Eating Oysters. The lady stands pouring wine into a tall glass held on a silver platter. Near her on the table are a dish of oysters and a plate of bread. The gentleman, seated nearby, watches the lady anxiously. By Pieter de Hooch.

Canvas or panel, 19½ inches by 16 inches.

Sale: Jacob Crammer Simonsz, Amsterdam, 1778.

LOST PAINTINGS ONCE LISTED AS BY VERMEER

A list of paintings said to be by Vermeer, concerning which there is documentary mention, and no present knowledge, was prepared by Dr. Hofstede de Groot for his admirable *Catalogue Raisonné*. This is herewith followed, with due acknowledgment of the research that made it possible.

A Young Girl Conversing with a Doctor (of Medicine?).

Canvas, 32 inches by 26 inches.

Sale: J. Hulswit, Amsterdam, 1822.

A Nun Reading.

Copper, 17 inches by 15 inches.

Sale: Leyden, 1821.

The Goldsmith's Shop. In a goldsmith's shop four tradesmen sit at a table. One has a touchstone in his hand. There are also two workmen.

Canvas, 12 inches by 13 ½ inches.

Sale: Barend Kooy, Amsterdam, 1820.

A Woman Weighing Gold. According to the description in the sale catalogues this work corresponds in certain respects to the painting of the Nieuhoff Sale, 1777 (now in the Widener Collection). The woman, however, wears a red dress and a black cap, which are apparently not identical with the costume of the work at Philadelphia. It is stated, furthermore, that in this picture an open door gives a view into a second room. The dimensions are not those of the Widener work.

Canvas, 24 inches by 21 inches.

Sales: The Hague, 1780 (?); Amsterdam, 1809.

At the Art Dealer's. A gentleman sits, his elbow on a table, and inspects objects of art which a dealer shows him. In his hand is a paper.

Signed on the paper: "J. v. d. Meer.

Panel, 11 inches by 10 inches.

Sale: M. Neven, Cologne, 1879.

The Flower Girl. With her right hand holding forth some flowers and her left grasping her cloak, a young girl at three-quarters length stands facing the spectator. Behind her is a stone bridge with balustrade, beyond which is a high wall with Roman statues. On a pedestal near the girl are a bird and a large sculptured vase, with a spray of orange blossoms.

Canvas, 19½ inches by 16½ inches.

Sale: Clavé-Bouhaben, Cologne, 1894.

A Lady Making Lace. She sits at a table. Said to be finely painted — by Vermeer or in his style.

Panel, 9½ inches by 8 inches.

Sale: D. de Jongh, Rotterdam, 1810.

A Woman Making Lace.

20 inches by 16 inches.

Sale: Hoorn, 1817.

A Woman Making Lace. Fine in its effect of light, brown, and vigorously painted.

Panel, 12 inches by 10½ inches.

Sale: H. Stokvisch, C. Henning and others, Amsterdam, 1823.

Woman and Boy Sitting by the Fireside in a Room.

Panel, 24 inches by 18 inches.

Sale: A. van Beestingh and others, Rotterdam, 1832.

A Woman at Work with a Child. Working at a table a woman in silk gown trimmed with fur receives an apple from a little girl.

Canvas, 37 inches by 24 inches.

Sale: Roos, Amsterdam, 1841, according to M. Thoré.

A Woman with Needlework in Her Lap. She looks at a child seated on the ground near her.

Panel, 36 inches by 26 inches.

Sales: (supplementary) P. M. Kesler, C. Apostool and others, Amsterdam, 1844; J. A. A. de Lelie and others, Amsterdam, 1835.

Woman and Child. In the background of a room is a young woman under strong light from a window, left. Through a half open door behind her a bed is seen. In front of the woman is a cradle with a sleeping child; to the right are a small stove, kitchen utensils on shelves, various vegetables and a cock in a coop. In the foreground, which is in shadow, an elderly woman is cooking at the fireplace, left, having pots and pans around her.

Signed: "J. v. der M."

Canvas, 14½ inches by 19½ inches.

Sale: C. Triepel, Munich, 1874.

An Old Woman with a Reel. She sits nearly in profile and at full length, being almost of life size. Her hands are in her lap. To the right is a reel. A small object on the wall has the form of a monogram of Vermeer: "J. v. M." (the letters intertwined).

Canvas, 52 inches by 44 inches.

Ascribed by Philipps, Eastlake, Thoré and Waagen to Vermeer of Delft. Offered to the National Gallery, London, in the period of M. Thoré's activities for £157 10 s., but declined. It later was for some time in the latter's possession and then in an English dealer's. Where it may be at present is unknown.

A Woman Paring Turnips. A woman pares turnips while on the other side of the room a man reads by the fire. Near the woman is a cradle with child in it.

Panel, 23½ inches by 19½ inches.

Sale: J. A. Brentano, Amsterdam, 1822.

A Woman Skinning an Eel. A young woman, at half length, sits, her head to the left, apparently conversing with an unseen person. She wears a cap and, under a purple jacket a red bodice. In her lap are a dish and napkin.

Signed with the Vermeer monogram.

Canvas on panel, 12 inches by 8½ inches.

Sale: Néville D. Goldsmid, Paris, 1876.

A Lady with a Maid-Servant and a Page.

28 inches by 25 inches.

Sale: Maclean, London, 1903.

An Interior with a Gentleman Washing His Hands, with a Vista and Figures.

Sale: Amsterdam, May 16, 1696.

This has the sound of a capital subject for Vermeer. It is recalled that Terborch did *A Lady Washing Her Hands*, one of his most delightful works.

A Woman Combing Her Hair.

15 inches by 13 inches.

Sale: Pieter de Klok — not Blok, as per M. Thoré — Amsterdam, 1744.

A Woman Washing a Boy's Head in a Room.

Sale: H. van der Heuvel and J. Hackefort, Rotterdam, 1816.

A Domestic Scene.

Sale: Rotterdam, 1820.

A Domestic Scene. Three figures, interior. Possibly identical with the foregoing.

Sale: Rotterdam, 1832.

A Man Playing Music, with a Lady in an Interior.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1696.

A Lady at the Spinnet with a Gentleman. Both are playing. Through an open window are seen houses.

Canvas, 32 inches by 25½ inches.

Sale: J. J. de J. J. de Faesch, Amsterdam, 1833.

The Concert.

15 inches by 11 ½ inches.

Sale: London, 1901.

The Love Letter. A page hands a letter to a lady.

Panel, 15 ½ inches by 12 ½ inches.

Sale: Hope Edwardes and others, London, 1901.

A Lady Writing. Writing at a table on which are a casket and writing materials sits a lady in yellow jacket trimmed with fur, facing the spectator.

Canvas, 18 ½ inches by 14 inches.

Sales: (probably) Amsterdam, 1696; Dr. Luchtman, Rotterdam, 1816; (probably) J. Kamermans, Rotterdam, 1825; H. Reydon and others, Amsterdam, 1827; Comte F. de Robiano, Brussels, 1837. Possibly No. 35 in the 1696 catalogue; perhaps the *Lady Writing*, J. P. Morgan Collection.

A Merry Company in a Room. Possibly *The Courtesan*, Dresden.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1696.

A Girl and a Cavalier. A young man courts a young woman who holds a wine glass. A table with various objects stands to the left.

Panel, 12 inches by 9 ½ inches.

Sale: Dr. Luchtman, Rotterdam, 1816.

A Trooper and a Girl. Holding a half-clad girl on his knee a trooper sits in an open hall. Before him is a Cupid to which the girl beckons. On the floor are trophies of war: standards, trumpets and so on. To the right is a view into the landscape.

Panel, 16 inches by 20 ½ inches.

Sale: Von Woyna and others, Bonn, 1898.

A Country Fair.

Sale: J. Kamermans, Rotterdam, 1825.

Head of a Person in Antique Costume. Pendant to the Arenberg *Portrait of a Young Girl*. Possibly *The Smiling Girl*, Mellon Collection.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1696.

Portrait of a Young Lady. Half length. She has a red gown with broad white sleeves, and a wide felt hat with plumes, beneath which brown curls are seen.

Panel, 29 inches by 22 ½ inches.

Sale: Neven, Cologne, 1879.

Portrait of Vermeer. In an interior with accessories.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1696. Probably the painting in the Czernin Collection, Vienna.

Portrait of a Young Man. Nearly half length. He wears a red plush hat, broad-brimmed, and a blue cloak. The left cheek is in strong light, the hat brim casting a deep shadow on the upper part of the face.

Panel, 9 inches by 7 inches.

Sale: Lafontaine, Paris, 1822.

A View of Some Houses. Presumably smaller than, or of quality inferior to, the *Little Street in Delft*, since it fetched a lower price.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1696.

The Oude Gracht in Haarlem near Klein Heiligland. Countrymen and their wives are en route in a boat to celebrate "Hartjesdag" on the dunes.

This work, according to the sale catalogue, bore the signa-

ture — probably added — of Berck-Heyde, but according to the general opinion was the work of Vermeer.

Panel, 18 inches by 15½ inches.

Sale: G. van der Pals, Rotterdam, 1824.

View of a Street in Delft.

Panel, 14 inches by 9 inches.

Sale: Abraham de Haas, Amsterdam, 1824.

A Landscape with Trees.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1825.

Part of a Town, with a View into an Entry.

Panel.

Sale: Amsterdam, 1825.

The Back of a House with a Courtyard.

Canvas.

Sales: Amsterdam, 1828; Amsterdam, 1830.

Two Pictures of Streets with Figures.

Panel, 14 inches by 9 inches each.

Sales: D. Teengs, Amsterdam, 1811; J. J. de J. J. de Faesch, Amsterdam, 1833.

Scene in a Courtyard. Two boys play in the straw in the courtyard of a brick house. Standing in a doorway a woman looks on. To the right, down a passage, is seen a street.

Panel, 18 inches by 14 inches.

Sale: A. W. C. Baron van Nagell van Ampsen, The Hague, 1851.

A Picture of a Street. A view in a town of picturesque houses. Four figures. The dimensions recall the views of towns by J. Vrel.

Panel, 15 inches by 10 inches.

Sales: H. Reydon and others, Amsterdam, 1827; A. W. C. Baron van Nagell van Ampsen, The Hague, 1851.

A Violent Storm at Sea. A shipwreck, with many figures.

Panel, 20 inches by 16 inches.

Collection of von Krane-Matena, Darmstadt, 1863. It is hard to conceive of a subject less likely to have been chosen by Vermeer, or more unfitted to his talent.

A Public Place at The Hague. In the square are lime trees and a pump. Houses, of varied architecture with picturesque angles, are in the background, right. In the foreground, in full light, is a knife grinder, in profile, engaged in conversation with an old woman, wearing a grey felt hat, who leans on a stick and holds a bottle in her right hand. Behind them a young woman waits with folded arms for the grinder to sharpen her knife. She seems to listen absently to compliments paid her by a gallant. A huntsman and dog cross the square, and other figures are discerned, going in various directions. Two white horses are drawing a cart forward.

52 inches by 77 inches.

Sale: Demidoff, San Donato, near Florence, 1880.

The painting seems unlikely to have been by Vermeer, since no other picture of such subject has been authenticated as from his hand.

[illegible]

30 May 1661
Platius backer.
Geest Bom als Meester Laten
aentajkinen Steden Dier
van Kensch: Geest 84 niet
betreft syndt M^{rs} soon
3-gulden

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IN THE TEXT of this volume, many of the books and magazine articles listed below have been given specific mention, as occasion has arisen. Instead of a situation in which, decade after decade, hardly anyone wrote a line concerning Jan Vermeer of Delft, there have come into existence in the past half-century, and especially in the past quarter-century, an ever-increasing number and variety of books and magazine articles on Vermeer, important and unimportant. Many of these are given below.

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